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**Cojuangco vs** Cojuangco in Tarlac election

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**Election fever grips Metro** Manila as mayoral bets flock to local Comelec offices

**Abalos brother leads group of tricycle drivers**

By Christine V. Bagamma

WHAT DOES a DOCTOR of medicine have to do with a group of tricycle drivers seeking representation in Congress?

Not only that, Dr. Rose

ABALOS, A13

PHILIPPINE DAILY
# INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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# 7 fighting for last 4 slots in Magic 12

## Legarda, Villar, Pangilinan top latest SWS survey

A MONTH INTO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE SENATORial race has tightened, with seven opposition, administration and independent candidates scrambling for the last four slots in the Magic 12, results of a nationwide survey conducted by Social Weather Stations on March 15-18 showed.

The seven candidates are former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, an independent candidate; reelectionist Sen. Joker Arroyo of the administration's Team Unity (TU), Tarlac Rep. Benigno Aquino III of the Genuine Opposition (GO), former Sen. Vicente Sotto III of TU, former Sen. John Osmeña of GO, Aquilino L. Pimentel III of GO and Michael Defensor of TU.

The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

GO candidates Loren Legarda (58 percent) and Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. (57 percent) led the roster of candidates "statistically in contention" for the 12 Senate seats at stake, according to SWS.

Mahar Mangahas, SWS president, said the group of 14 candidates was "unchanged from February."

Legarda and Villar overtook reelectionist Sen. Francis Pangilinan, an independent candidate, who is in third place (48 percent).

The SWS 2007 pre-election survey used face-to-face interviews with 1,200 registered voters. They were divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

The respondents were asked the questions "If elections were to take place today, whom would you most probably vote for as senators of the Philippines?"

TOGETHER, A11

EXOTIC fish species fill a glass fish tank in a Hong Kong restaurant. The demand for coral fish has exploded in the wake of China's booming economy, leaving some species such as the humphead wrasse on the endangered list. REUTERS

## *China hunger for reef fish emptying Asian seas*

HONG KONG—TURQUOISE FISH with red dots stare at hungry tourists from a tank at a restaurant in Hong Kong, the capital of the world's live reef fish industry, a lucrative trade devastating reefs across the Pacific Ocean.

Demand for coral fish, considered a delicacy, has exploded in line with China's booming economy and some species, such as the humphead wrasse, are already endangered.

"You may not be able to eat it in four or five years, whatever money you pay. This is the favorite among people from mainland China," said a fish merchant, who gave his name only as Chris.

Restaurant fish tanks in Hong Kong are filled with exotic fish species gathered in the waters around the Philippines, other Southeast Asia countries, Australia and even remote Pacific islands, such as Fiji and Vanuatu.

Humphead wrasse, also known as Napoleon wrasse, commands as much as $280 a fillo. A blue adult can grow to more than two meters and weigh 208 kg.

"That's a lot of money for a fisherman," George Woodman, a director of the conservation group Teng Hoi, said. "You can get a lot of people to move for that money ... The search is very big."

CHINA, A9

# Dutch ambassador describes PPT as a kangaroo tribunal

By Cynthia D. Balana and Michael Lim Ubac

THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR TO THE Philippines yesterday said the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) that found the Arroyo administration responsible for political killings in the Philippines was not much more than a kangaroo court—a view shared by Malacañang officials and their allies in Congress.

"We should not pretend that any other verdict on this government would have been possible. Pieces that respect perhaps, we should think of it more as a kangaroo tribunal than anything else," Netherlands Ambassador Robert Versteeg said.

A kangaroo court is defined by Webster as a self-appointed tribunal that disregards or parodies principles of law or human rights and in "no controlled as to render a fair trial impossible."

The PPT jury held the Arroyo administration responsible for human rights abuses "with the support and full awareness of the government of George Walker Bush."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government was "doing everything to solve these killings" and that at least 60 cases involving such killings had been brought to court.

Versteeg said the PPT's verdict was "not serious" because the accused were not even invited to the sessions.

"It would seem to me that the verdict

DUTCH, A6

## Victims' kin elated by guilty verdict

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE VERDICT OF AN INTERNATIONAL forum holding the Arroyo administration responsible for unsolved killings in the Philippines may be legally nonbinding but it gave families of the victims a glimmer of hope in their quest for justice.

"We are happy because Mr Arroyo will soon be punished ...," said Concepcion Empeño, mother of University of the Philippines student, Karen Empeño, who was allegedly abducted by soldiers in Bataan in June 2006.

Empeño was among the few people who gathered at a Quezon City hotel to watch a taped recording of the promulgation by the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) at the Pax Christi Berk, a church in The Hague, the Netherlands, at 1 p.m. on Sunday (9 p.m. in Manila).

The video was provided by Karapatan, a militant human rights organization which has counted 804 alleged extrajudicial killings since 2001 when President Macapagal-Arroyo assumed power. (The Inquirer has placed the figure at less than 800.)

VICTORY, A16

# Rosales: It's not one-sided, it's both sides

### Esperon on new Leyte mass grave: We want to verify this, I'm not an undertaker

By Christine O. Avendaño and Van Labro
Inquirer Visayas

GEN. HERMOGENES ESPERON YESterday said the authorities still had to verify an Army report that a second mass grave had been found in Southern Leyte containing the remains of victims of communist purges in the 1980s.

"We want to verify this before we invite you there so that no one could say that this [site] are contained skeletal remains that came from Skool or other places. I am not an undertaker," the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff told reporters in Filipino.

Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo, who is detained on charges he masterminded the killings by the communist New People's Army of suspected spies, has accused Esperon of "recycling" heroes and dumping them in a mass grave.

The buried site was reportedly dug up in Inopacan, Southern Leyte, in August 2006. It was said to contain the remains of 67 victims of the NPA purges.

Esperon said that even if there were mass grave sites, one person buried by the NPA was still one life taken by the armed group.

By Nikko Dizon and Veit Cardenas

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO Cardinal Rosales yesterday called on both the military and the insurgents to stop the political killings in the country even as he criticized the United States for investigating the murders when it was to self-engaged in killings, particularly in Iraq.

"Unfortunately, it is very bad ... It's not one-sided, it's both sides," Rosales said.

"The government should be told and that's what we are doing," the prelate said in Filipino. "Now our brothers in the communists should also be told. They also have to stop."

Rosales spoke to reporters after the ordination of Bishop Leopoldo Jaucian at the Christ the King Church in Quezon City.

Rosales said killing people was wrong "whether extrajudicial or judicial."

"To our brothers in the mountains, it is also wrong to kill. They also kill. Sorry for saying that. It comes to the same thing. That is equally wrong," Rosales said.

The prelate said he was also appealing to "our brothers of other faiths and other traditions, I don't want to name them, to also stop (the killings)."

He said the Americans were investigating the killings in the Philippines, yet they were engaged in killings in Iraq.

"You see how widespread this evil is in the world. In general, we must cultivate a culture of peace ... a culture of peace and helping each other," he said.

Rosales expressed the hope that every-

ESPERON, A13 ROSALES, A7

## Militants' calls for pullout of troops rejected

By Christine O. Avendaño, Nikko Dizon and TJ Burgonio

DEFENSE SECRETARY HERMOGENES Ebdane yesterday rejected calls by militant groups and the auxiliary bishop of Manila for the withdrawal of 300 Army soldiers deployed in 26 impoverished barangays in the capital.

"If the people themselves complain... then it's time to quit or to stop this activity," Ebdane told reporters.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo has joined demands by leftist groups for the pullout of the soldiers, saying they were harassing people and campaigning against left-

MILITANTS, A7

**WEATHER FORECAST**

Second
# FRONTPAGE

E-mail: pi_news@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/news

# Solar I owners face dummy law raps

By Tina G. Santos

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE YESTERDAY FILED charges for violation of the anti-dummy law against the officials of the shipping company that owns the oil tanker which sank off Guimaras Island last year causing the worst spill in the country's history.

Charged with violating Commonwealth Act No. 108 as amended by Presidential Decree No. 715, or the Anti-Dummy Law, before the Manila Regional Trial Court were Japanese nationals Hiroyasu Yamaguchi, Hiroyasu Yamaguchi, Yasuaki Ishihara, and Philippine Claimants Gaude, Roberto Mesa, Gregorio Flores and Angelita Buenaventura, all of the Sandoval Maritime Development Corp. (SMDC), and Dionisio Sandoy, a former stockbroker.

SMDC owns the sunken 837-foot-long I which sank on Aug. 11, 2006, in rough seas off Guimaras Island, spilling approximately half a million liters of bunker fuel oil and polluting the 100-kilometer coastline, forcing fishing grounds, marine reserves and tourist resorts.

The vessel, which lies at the bottom of the sea, was transporting about two million liters of bunker fuel for the oil company Petron when it sank.

In its resolution, the DOJ said the respondents violated the law when they allowed Hiroyasu and Hiroshingo to be elected as treasurer and vice president, respectively, of SMDC.

SMDC is primarily engaged in coastwise shipping operations, a nationalized industry reserved for Filipino citizens or corporations and cooperatives organized under Philippine laws with at least 60 percent Filipino ownership.

However, the DOJ noted that in many of SMDC's officials documents, both Hiroyasu and Hiroshingo illegally occupied key positions in the corporation.

Apart from being the treasurer, Hiroyasu was also the chair of the board of directors. Hiroshingo, on the other hand, was also one of the shipping company's board members, aside from being its vice president.

There were also several matters discovered during the investigation that revealed that the Japanese incorporators, in violation of the anti-Dummy Law, largely controlled the company and were intervening in its management, operation, administration and control, the DOJ said in its resolution.

Of the 55.5 million paid-up capital of SMDC, P4 million was the actual share of the Japanese partners.

The NBI, which conducted the investigation, noted that the real owners of the Filipino incorporators were not known in plain or ostensible terms.

It is surprising how Yamaguchi, Hiroyasu, Ishihara, Hiroshingo and Buenaventura, who are not even stockholders of the corporation, could have the power to invest such huge amounts of money in SMDC."

Petron, in fact, went to the NBI and executed an affidavit stating that they were mere dummies, the NBI said.

The Solar I was leased from a Panamanian-registered corporation called Prime Master Maritime, S.A. which in several documents was represented by its president Hiroyasu Yamaguchi, who is also vice president of SMDC.

"It's crystal clear from the plethora of documentary evidences submitted by the NBI that the respondents have violated the provisions of the law," the DOJ said, adding that respondents knew fully well that the holding of positions by the two Japanese nationals is prohibited by law."

"From the very beginning, the respondents conceived or allowed themselves to be used as dummies of the Japanese incorporators," DOJ charged.

## Keep off Arroyos' case, judge orders media

By Yuki Candovan

A QUEZON CITY COURT HAS recently warned media organizations, including the Inquirer, to keep off the child custody dispute between President Macapagal-Arroyo's brother-in-law, Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, and his estranged wife, Evelina Arroyo.

Judge Nimfa Cruz Lutero Pascua yesterday said that discussions on the case should be confined to the courtroom and not spill out into "the so-called 'court of public opinion' or the 'court of the air.'"

Pascua, who presides over Branch 107 of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, warned that the gag order she issued on March 22 not only covered the lawyers appearing in the case but also "extended to any person or media outlet in a direct or indirect position to influence [court] proceedings."

That order, she said, "encompasses in the entire spectrum of the wide dissemination of the spouses, their properties, work or personal, legal accounts of whatsoever nature or nomenclature, until all details that cater to the idle curiosity of third parties."

It was issued "with the end view of upholding the sanctity of the canvas where both parties profess to love, and preventing anyone from using the issue as a venue for washing their dirty linen in public."

The case stemmed from the petition of the two-time elected in January for joint parental custody of their only child, a 9-year-old girl.

The judge ordered copies of her March 22 order to be furnished the media companies, naming the Inquirer among them.

"Days noted that a day after the issuance of the order, the Inquirer carried another front page story on the case," to the dismay of this court."

"The parties and counsels are merely reminded that they have sought the intervention of this court to settle their differences and that they must therefore confine their remedies to the four walls of this court and no other place," she said.

"This court will therefore judiciously guard its prerogatives over this case and will not allow the issues to spill out beyond the confines of the courtroom," the judge added.

## Negros tillers ask for fence to keep rivals out

By TJ Burgonio

FARMER-BENEFICIARIES OF THE land yesterday asked Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman to fence off a portion of a sugar estate in Negros Occidental where some of them had been installed to keep a rival group of farm workers at bay.

The beneficiaries, who were on a 29-day hunger strike outside the Department of Agrarian Reform office said they had been told by their installers in the land here Thursday, look this up in a meeting with Undersecretaries Narciso Nieto and Bernie Cruz at the DAR office.

The DAR officials promised to take it up with Pangandaman.

"If the area has been fenced off, we can stop the other group from intruding. After the installation, some of them continued to plant in the area," Jose Rodico Angeles, president of the farmers' umbrella organization Task Force Mapalad, said in an interview.

Now that their case pitched outside the DAR office on Elliptical Road in Quezon City has been settled, the farmer-beneficiaries are ready to board a ship back home, and are only awaiting the DAR's order to fence off the area.

"If we have that order, we can always file charges of trespassing if others start to intrude," Angeles said.

Pangandaman, who had arranged the pooling of teams of policemen and soldiers in the portion of the sugar estate, said Thursday that he will request for the ouster of the "dummy-farmers" beside the Hacienda Velez-Buenga in La Castellana town.

"It's worth looking into," he said in an interview.

The secretary sounded confident that the deployment of 200 Army soldiers and 20 local policemen had so far managed to assure any violence. He said the police would set up a permanent police precinct in the area to maintain law and order after the soldiers and the police leave.

Pangandaman, backed by soldiers and policemen, installed 87 of the 123 beneficiaries in the 144-hectare portion of the property, which was covered by a collective certificate of land ownership award (CLOA) issued by the DAR in 2002.

The land is part of a sprawling 443-ha sugarcane plantation owned by Roberto Lacson.

A group of farm workers loyal to Lacson had opposed the installation, and filed a motion for reconsideration with the DAR Region VI's resolution declaring the 123 beneficiaries legitimate. Once resolved, the DAR would go ahead with the installation of the rest.

The beneficiaries had been fighting to own and till the land since it was placed under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program in 1998. Carmen had managed to block this by filing cases in local courts.

But in 2003, two years after the beneficiaries were granted the CLOA, the Supreme Court ruled that all controversies on agrarian reform will under the DAR's jurisdiction, clearing the way for the installation.

## Pool champion denies molesting daughter

By Marlon Ramos

DOUBLE WORLD POOL CHAMPion 10-ball and 9-ball Rosario "Ronnie" Alonzo has denied accusations that he molested his 14-year-old daughter, who made the revelation in a television interview yesterday.

"Hindi po totoo yung isinilang nya. [The news is not true.]," Alonzo said yesterday in an interview with the Inquirer.

Perry Mariano, Alonzo's manager and benefactor, confirmed the allegations.

Vilma Alonzo, Alonzo's estranged wife, said the girl had confided in her.

"Hindi totoo yun. Matuklil nga nagbabayo na kanang yun. Siyam-pu iba na kasi ang bahay ni Ronnie ngayon na bukod sa nagbayad ng isang bagong Avanza pa. [That's not true. Someone just beat up on Ronnie's life in other words. He has money and a new car.]," he said.

"Ang totoo niyan ay umaasang po ng isang bata sa akin ng P300,000 dapat aabutan pa sana kaso ang PUKOOM. [The truth is, the child is borrowing P300,000 from me although her titles already gone her P300,000 [," Mariano said. "Ako bahagi ako pero hindi. Dito dito lang kapitan.]."

He told Alonzo's daughter will file a case of "child abuse" against Alonzo in the Department of Justice.

Alonzo's closest friends, Tomas de Leon Jr. and Jacinto Ramos, vouched for the character of the world pool champion.

"Pasaway man gyan pero di ang hair-bali sa asta ni Ronnie? Hindi niya magagawa yung bagay na di-pinahintig. Gusto ko rin ibat kapatid ko sa pool. Ganyan ka pala kabait. Di nga nawa'y dyahe? Ke bata bata nasisira ang future nya. [Pasaway man but not to that extent. He has money and a new car.]," he said.

Alonzo has had a good run these past months. In November, he won the World 9-ball crown in Manila. In February, he got a P1-million win in the World 10-ball championship, the same title ignorance of the Asian 9-ball ever which will kick off on April 20 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

At the same time, he inked a one-year contract with Mister Group.

Last month, he won the World 8-ball in Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates.


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GO will serve as a clear moral opposition for all Filipinos especially those who have been in politics a regime that glorifies the culture of corruption, graft and the unconstitutional grabbing of power.

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1. Generate more jobs through labor intensive infrastructure projects in the rural areas rather than mega projects which are prone to mega scale corruption.
2. Train our youth on higher skilled disciplines through increased budgetary allocations for our educational system at all levels including teacher's pay/benefits, classrooms, computers, distance learning and school feeding programs except automatic rice subsidies.
3. Substantially lower the cost of drugs by as much as 50% by providing incentives for domestic production of drugs, adoption of price control reforms in the health sector and possible importation of affordable medicines.
4. Lower the costs of transportation and power through the aggressive development of renewable domestic sources of energy.
5. Reject one room such as the proposed cap on text messaging imposed via administrative and exclusively utilize the additional revenues collected from DAP for priority areas like education, healthcare, agriculture and science and technology.
6. Strengthen the protection of human rights by granting prosecutorial powers to the Commission on Human Rights and upgrading its investigative capabilities and review the government's counter-insurgency program so the emphasis on the heavily militarist approach and once again address the deeper causes of social conflict - poverty and injustice - through development programs.
7. Contribute to the arrest of global warming and ensure a cleaner and better environment like waste generation through programs that would coordinate the use of deposit trade, refurbishment, home electricity consumption and waste recycling.
8. Organize additional support programs for OFWs that will provide them with legal assistance abroad in their countries of work, and bring to local entertainment and welfare and counselling services to the families they leave behind.
9. Reinforce the effectiveness of the army in its role in combating against graft and corruption by decentralizing their unit increasing penalties for harsh desertion or malfeasance.
10. Institute other meaningful reforms to make the economy more dynamic, efficient and equitable and make our Filipino workers and enterprises more globally competitive.

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REGISTRATION FORM

# Customs collectors refuse to be bound by attrition law

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DISTRICT COLLECTORS OF THE BUREAU of Customs yesterday refused to sign a performance contract that would bind them to the penalty clause of the attrition law which would result in their termination should they fail to meet their collection targets.

Most the 16 district collectors will instead submit a **[illegible]** to the contract as "unfair."

"I will submit the case to the lawyers and they [illegible]," Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales told the reporters after he met with the bureau's district directors.

The contract would have bound the signatories to the attrition law starting with the 2007 collections. The bureau was given a P328-billion revenue collection target for 2007, according to the contract.

And as the law provides for bonuses to BOC employees in case of a surplus in collections, it orders the termination of employees who fail to meet their collection targets by 7.5 percent or higher. The implementing rules of the law call for the signing of a performance contract listing the individual targets of each collector.

Morales said he had anticipated the collectors' refusal to sign the contract. In a meeting last week, when he first presented the contract, the district collectors asked for more time to consult their collectorates.

"Whether the law is unconstitutional or not, we can't do anything because that is the law. We have to follow," Morales said, adding that he himself signed a performance contract.

If the penalty part of the law were to be implemented for the 2006 collection, seven of the 16 district collectors would have been criminally including officials and employees under them depending on their job descriptions.

For instance, the Manila International Container Port collected the second highest amount last year, but its P46 billion was short by more than 10 percent of its P51-billion target.

The port has a target of P57 billion.

On the other hand, the Subic Bonded Warehouse collected only P606 million last year, but this was 106.6 percent higher than its P587 million target, as its collectors were not attributable.

The port is target is pegged at P660 million.

# Med tech must pay for misdiagnosis

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY ORDERED A medical technologist to pay damages to a patient he erroneously found positive for the Sinta disease bacteria, which led to her temporarily losing her job.

The high tribunal affirmed an earlier Court of Appeals ruling ordering medical technologist Orlando Garcia Jr. of the Commission On Appointments Center (COC) in Makati to pay P125,000 in moral and exemplary damages and attorney's fees to Ronida Salvador for "gross negligence." A trial court had initially dismissed the case.

According to the high court, Garcia's failure to follow the proper procedures when he administered the Reynolds & Gardner Antigen (Rita Ag) test which resulted in a wrong diagnosis and the release of the test Salvador her pH and subjected her another humiliating second exposure.

Garcia may not have intended to cause the consequences which followed the release of the test result. However, his failure to comply with the laws and rules for the protection of the public constitutes a "breach of duty," the highest court said in its March 20 decision.

Garcia, in his defense, denied he was negligent and said he followed appropriate laboratory procedures and "did everything within his professional competence to arrive at an objective, impartial and impersonal result."

But investigation showed that Garcia committed the test for hepatitis B without a physician's supervision and released the results also without a physician's authorization as required under the Philippine Medical Technologists Act and the Department of Health.

Dr. Ike Castro, past president of the Philippine Medical Association, was identified as the head of COC in its review for 1995 and 1996. Garcia, however, denied he owned it was explained by COC but that he only went to the center when a case was referred to him. He said he did not examine Salvador and that the test results bore only his rubber stamp signature.

The appeals court had exonerated Garcia because he did not participate in issuing the results. The owners of the clinic were not charged.

"The public demands no less than an effective and efficient performance of clinical laboratory examinations through compliance with the quality standards set by laws and regulations," the high court said, adding that "Garcia failed to comply with these standards."

Salvador first went to the COC for a medical exam in 1993 when she began working at Century Park Hotel as a food handler.

When the COC submitted her hepatitis B test result, her employment was terminated. Salvador said her father suffered a heart attack when he learned of the test results.

Salvador then underwent confirmatory tests for hepatitis B, including two at COC, all of which were negative. COC's medical technologist in charge then issued a certification saying Salvador's initial test results were wrong.

# Nakasisiguro Kayo Sa Dekalidad At Mas Abot-Kayang Gamot!

Gamot na Mabisa at Abot-kaya

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## THE DAILY GOSPEL

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3rd Week of Lent

1st Reading: Num 21:4-9
Gospel: John 8:21-30

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "I am going away and though you look for me, you will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." The Jews wondered, "Why does he say that we can't come where he is going? Will he kill himself?"

But Jesus said, "You are from below and I am from above; you are of this world and I am not of this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. And you shall die in your sins unless you believe that I am he."

They asked him, "Who are you?"; and Jesus said, "Just what I have told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the One who sent me is truthful and everything I learned from him, I proclaim to the world."

They didn't understand that Jesus was speaking to them about the Father. So he went on, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of myself, but I say just what the Father taught me. He who sent me is with me and has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him." As Jesus spoke like this, many believed in him.

*Contemporary*

*The people are plagued with iniquity because they again complain bitterly in the desert even though they are cared for by God. For healing they are to look upon a bronze serpent prepared against evil and thus they shall recover. This is the image that Jesus will become—the lion of Man lifted up on crucifixion, nailed to a mast, and yet, anyone who looks upon him in his agony and woe, utter hate, violence, malice, sin, injustice, and evil can do, will be healed, forgiven, saved and drawn into his life that alone shows what the truth is. Jesus only tells the world the truth as he has heard it from his Father, the Truthful One, and does only what pleases God. So we do only what pleases God, obeying with Jesus and spreading the truth in the world! He we stand with the Son of Man who will be crucified!*

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## Corrections

IN THE MARCH 26 ISSUE, a headline in the front-page news—"Security Council imposes new sanctions on Iraq"—and the banner headline of The World section on Page A29—"UN Council slaps new sanctions on Iraq"—misstated the country that was moved out sanctioned by the UN Security Council. The sanctions were imposed on Iran—not Iraq.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a word was omitted in the headline of a news report in WorldWatch on Page A10. The headline should have read, "Strong quake in central Japan, 1 killed"—not "Strong in central Japan, 1 killed."

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a front-page story—"Teaming tokens: a challenge to literacy"—misstated that the 2001 Manyi shoot-five, which killed 194 people, was the country's worst fire. The blaze that spurred the Ormoc Disco in 1996 killed 160 people.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, Manuel L. Quezon III's "The Long View" column on Page A12 of the Opinion section—"Diminished headcost"—misstated the year that Gregorio Honasan played Cole in the "Magnificent Seven." Honasan finished 13th in the 1995—not 2004—senatorial race. Honasan, however, went on to the Senate for three years to complete the unfinished term of Teofisto Guingona, who was appointed Vice President weeks after John II in January 2001. Honasan did not run for senator in 2004.


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# Pimentel son says continued gov't denials strengthen suspicions

By Gina Pestilos

GENUINE OPPOSITION SENATORIAL CANdidate Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III yesterday said the Arroyo administration's continued denial of the rumor of extrajudicial killings in the country strengthened the perception that the killings were government-sanctioned.

He said the government, which is ultimately responsible for curing a cure to the killings, should face the problem rather than "keep on shooting the messenger."

"As a lawyer, I'm willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. But if they continue to avoid answering the substance of the message, then maybe there's substance to the accusation that this has become state policy," said Pimentel, a bar topnotcher and son of incumbent Sen. Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr.

"Why does it keep on moving a blind eye? This is no longer just the Commander in Chief's responsibility. This is already the Commander in Chief's complicity," he added.

"If our government continues its state of denial that there are no human rights violations, when international organizations have expressed alarm at grave and rampant human rights violations, then the public should now speak up," Pimentel said.

He said that when elected, opposition senators would conduct a more thorough investigation.

"Our promise is: we will investigate each and every one of these extrajudicial killings and get to the root of these and bring to justice the perpetrators, unlike the Arroyo administration that is in a state of denial," he said.

# Victims' kin elated by guilty verdict

From page A1

European secretary general Maite Albo-Enriquez delivered "urgent condemnation" on the human rights situation in the country before the Senate, composed of lawyers, writers and human rights activists.

"Mr. Arroyo might not be jailed for this, but she has already been put in shame in front of the world," said Empuño, who came from Zambales to view the verdict made footage of the last day of the 197's 36-day hearing on the Philippines.

In linda Galapate, mother of another UP student, Shirley Galapate, who was allegedly abducted along with Empuño, she did not miss the show. She was relieved and stated about the "guilty" verdict, she said.

Cadapan gave her testimony and was examined by a six-member jury through a television conference during the hearing.

"I am hopeful that this will pressure the Arroyo government to return to us our missing daughters," she told the Inquirer yesterday.

## GMA, Bush

The international forum heard the charges brought by a broad coalition of activist and religious groups, and called on Mr. Arroyo and US President George Bush responsible for the cases of unsolved killings and forced disappearances cases in the Philippines.

The 12-page document, a copy of which was e-mailed to the Inquirer, has founding eight, said the "wealth and extensive" of the evidence written testimonies provided by witnesses and experts were substantiated. It documented the killings, enforced disappearances, tortures and torturers as "crimes against humanity."

"The commission and the government failure of the violations of the rights of the Filipino people committed by the governments of [Mr. Arroyo] and with the support and full connivance of the government of [US President] Bush justify the same violations as crimes against humanity — such violations must be stopped immediately," said Albo-Enriquez in Belgium-based press release and president of the session.

The video showed a blurred Bonner flanked by the other two members—Dale Mahon, a well-known novelist and moral activist from Japan; Tim Dekker, a professor in criminal law in the Netherlands; Dennis Trevor, lawyer and former director of the Earth Foundation and former foreign ministry official in South Africa and Zambia; Jenna Hernandez, a lawyer and social development expert from Malaysia, and Lilia Solano, an attendee of the 2005 Right Livelihood Award Colombia.

## Track records

Ms Arroyo's political allies labeled the verdict as flash propaganda, but Empuño said the tribunal was composed of "internationally eminent" personalities who each held credible track records in the field of human rights.

Ms Arroyo and Bush were accused of gross and systematic violation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the Filipinos' rights to national self-determination and liberation.

According to the complainants, the sad and sorrowing plight of human rights in the Philippines must be seen in the context of the US strategies "for global economic and military hegemony" and the US-led "war on terror."

They also cited Oplan Bantay Laya, a counterinsurgency scheme initially drawn up under the Marcos regime, as the "final solution" of the US-backed Arroyo administration.

The group based "unequivocal" evidence proving the military is the mirror of the "grave and systematic" violations of human rights committed in the Philippines according to the complainants, the United States of the Philippines continued to be an instrument of suppression under the guidance and support of the US counterinsurgency and antiterrorism operation.

They also found "unacceptable" the inclusion of the Philippine government in the UN Human Rights Council, saying:

- It undermines the credibility of the United Nations.
- It is an intolerable offense to the victims.
- It is a denial of the many well-documented denunciations of the dramatic violations of human rights in the Philippines.

## Deposition

The decision was handed down after the jury heard and examined several eyewitnesses, experts, relatives of victims of alleged extrajudicial killings through the television conference in Manila.

Among those who gave depositions and testimony to The Hague were Bishop Elmer Bolocon of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the Emmanuel Bishop Alvarez, Bagong Diyosang Mahalagain (Brigade chair Carol Nagahan-Arnolfo, Bobby Reyes of the Center for People Empowerment and Governance, and Ret. Commander of the Philippine Peace Center.

"The findings are legally nonenforceable but they are morally binding," said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr., one of the complainants.

Activists expressed hope that the verdict would bring added pressure to the government to put a stop to the widespread crime against human rights in the country.

## 'Beginning of end'

However, in concluding the session, said the jury would transmit the judgment to the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the European Parliament and various foreign governments.

Evangelina Fernandez of Bayan and Tess Bacon of Gabriela Women's said it was the "beginning of the end" of the Arroyo administration, which they compared to the regime of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The HPI first convened for the Philippines in Antwerp in 1980 to hear charges brought against Marcos. It later found the dictator guilty of grave and systematic economic and political crimes against the Filipino people.

Since the tribunal was founded in 1979 by the Italy-based Lelio Basso International Foundation, it has conducted 10 sessions considered to be "symbolic and instructive" in carrying out hearings and pinpointing accountability.

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# Rosales: It's ...

one would make a promise to save his butt on evidence.

He said the most the Catholic Church would do in light of all this was to embrace Christ's call to expend such riches and not kill one other.

"We don't have arms [to protect somebody]," Bernas said. "He would even be killed. Remember a lot of priests have already been killed [protecting human rights]," Bernas said in Filipino.

### Keep it home

For its part, the Commission on Human Rights maintained civil society agitator further taking the issue of political killings in the country to the international arena, urging the Supreme Court that should call for allowed "to solve its own problem" without foreign governments "meddling."

CHR spokesperson Ed Shantoy accused this in reaction to the so-called "crisis" in the CHR. The bigger by the Permanent People's Tribunal, which held the Philippine government responsible for the unsolved killings.

"Let's wait for the result of the special courts," Shantoy said, noting that it was the commission that recommended these measures.

He said the commission was "monitoring whether the govern-

ROSALES's appeals: in the military and rebel guards: Stop the killing.

ment has been acting fast enough" and that its position as of now was "let's give them time."

"Let the Philippine government solve its problem instead of going to the international arena and having foreign governments coming in and interfering, which is wrong," he added.

"What we [in the CHR] fear is that other governments might think that the Philippine government cannot solve this," Shantoy said.

# Militants' calls for pullout of troops rejected

on parts for confidence.

Military officials said the soldiers, who were fielded begin ning in November last year, were engaged in sentinel and overwatch activities.

Dobaro maintained that it was not the people in their barangays who were complaining about the presence of the military but the Left and militant groups.

### Barangays welcome troops

Barangay residents accepted the work done by the military and were "very thankful for it," said Dobaro.

Dobaro said he had been meeting with Commission on Human Rights officials but they had not mentioned to him about a report of CHR request for the AFP to recall the soldiers.

Dobaro acknowledged that his department was reviewing the deployment, just as it was reviewing the government's internal security operations.

Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., retired Senate of the Philippines chief of staff, said the military was still studying the CHR request for the AFP to pull out the troops in Metro Manila.

"So ... We're open to anything but we're studying it," Esperon told reporters, when asked whether he would order the pullout of troops in the metropolis.

### Worse under Marcos

Manila Archbishop Cardinal Cardinal Rosales said that the absence of the military during the time of the late President Ferdinand Marcos says a lot worse than the reported militarization in Metro Manila's urban poor communities.

Rosales said the present-day militarization — even if ostensibly targeted to the Marcos era — was something that should not be condoned.

"It has been there for a long time. He went through it during the time of Marcos, when Marcos ... It's no old thing," Rosales told, speaking alternately in Filipino and English. "What we went through was worse than what is happening now. It's nothing."

Rosales spoke in separation yesterday after the ordination rites at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Quezon City of Leopoldo Arcenas as the new bishop of Bangued, Abra.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, along with Papal Nuncio to the Philippines Fernando Filoni and some 30 bishops, attended the event.

Rosales said clues on his death now was Dublin's report on the coup-plotting unrest in Metro Manila. He did not comment on it but said that a copy of the report had been sent to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and that he would discuss it with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

### CBCP intervention

Yesterday, the Rebolusyon group Nasyonalismo Laban ng Kilusang Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (Nasdakdak) said the party-list group Akbayanek urged CBCP president Angel Lagdameo to issue a pastoral statement condemning the deployment of troops in the metropolis and calling for their pullout.

"We appeal for the spiritual and moral intervention of the CBCP pertaining to this issue of AFP urban militarization and electioneering campaign in Metro Manila against party-list groups highly critical of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration," Pemuldadjaya Fernando Ilagan said in a statement.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas voiced hopes the other bishops would follow the lead of Rosales, and take a strong stance against the deployment of troops.

"We ardently hope that all the other bishops will follow suit to stop the military from further harassing and terrorizing the people," Willy Marfelita, KMP deputy secretary general, said in a statement.

Anakpawis secretary general Cherry Gerasmo said there were many reasons willing to testify against military officials and personnel harassing leaders and supporters of urban poor groups in Manila, Caloocan and Quezon City.

# Malacañang on SWS survey: The President is not a candidate

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY shrugged off the Social Weather Stations survey showing the low public approval of President Macapagal-Arroyo and her Cabinet.

"President Arroyo is not a candidate in this election and we are not inclined to play the game of polls and surveys," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

The particular SWS survey was not about the coming elections but on the public satisfaction on the performance of the government, including the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

The SWS told Senate President Manuel Villar and Vice President Noli de Castro continued to get high ratings of public satisfaction, but the President and her official family got low or negative scores.

The survey said the government received negative 2 rating, and the Cabinet as a whole got negative 2 in the survey conducted during the period of Feb. 24-27.

The same survey said public awareness was "merely neutral" for Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno, while Villar got a "very good" net rating of positive 53 and De Castro a "fairly good" rating of positive 36.

Bunye said Ms Arroyo was "focused on a clear mission to [make] the economy grow and benefit the people" and was not bothered by the survey.

"We are not concerned about the surveys; we'll see how on the real everyday challenges that confront the people—alleviating hunger, creating jobs and checking prices of essential items," he added.


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# Dutch ambassador describes PPT as a kangaroo tribunal

Turn to page A3

of the tribunal was a foregone conclusion and, therefore, it's a tribunal that is, to me at least, more of a political exercise than a judicial exercise," Sorsa told reporters.

Sorsa said that, like other European countries, his country was also concerned about the human rights situation in the Philippines.

### Stop the killings

Ambassador Alistair MacDonald, head of the European Commission (EC) in the Philippines, said the European Union would use June any statement on the PPT verdict because the tribunal was a "nonofficial body, nongovernment."

The European envoys spoke to reporters at a press conference called to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Union, an organization of 27 countries. The European Commission is its executive body.

Pressed to describe the Philippine government's human rights efforts, MacDonald said: "I don't think that's a question I can easily answer. The government is responsible for the citizens of the Philippines in protecting their human rights."

He added: "First, stop the killings and second is to prosecute, identify and bring to justice those who have been carrying them out."

### EC supports team

MacDonald said the European Commission would send an "assessment mission" of experts to determine what kind of assistance to give to the Philippines in investigating cases of extrajudicial killings.

Germany's Ambassador Axel Hirshkorpf said the commission was "in intensive dialogue" with the Philippine government to find out what specifically was needed.

YONHAP

"It's not an investigation. He will bring experts in the field to identify the kind of support we can provide," MacDonald said.

Ambassador Hirshkorpf said: "I don't think that's a question I can easily answer. The government is responsible for the citizens of the Philippines in protecting their human rights."

He added: "First, stop the killings and second is to prosecute, identify and bring to justice those who have been carrying them out."

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### 'The world knows'

"The whole world knows that it's the most biased, small nongovernment organization. Because the outcome was known to all long before the hearing started," National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales told the Inquirer by phone.

Gonzales also said: "It's a court that has no officialdom or anything. It's an example of the court of communists. A kangaroo court."

Gonzales said the concern of the international community with the human rights situation in the country "is not even doing their jobs all along...but they did it outside of the spotlight."

### Ebdane agrees

Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane said the PPT was nothing but an "international kangaroo court."

"How can they come up with that conclusion when they haven't talked to any organization or agency?" he said.

Asked to comment on the 69 cases brought to court, four had resulted in convictions.

"The former were more cases resolved now that the special court is in place," he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said the figures showed that lawenforcers "have been doing their jobs all along...but they did it outside of the spotlight."

### Ebdane agrees

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"How can they come up with that conclusion when they haven't talked to any organization or agency?" he said.

Finally tweeted was Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

"Maybe it (PPT) is a bunch of Europeans or they are smoking marijuana," Esperon told reporters.

### 'Patron of crimes'

Representatives Douglas Cagas of Davao del Sur and Eduardo Ma˜ono of Leyte, in a joint statement, said it was ironic for the tribunal to talk about human rights violations while The Netherlands was "the host of the patron of these crimes."

They were referring to Communist Party of the Philippines founding chair Jose Maria Sison, who is currently exile in Utrecht.

Cagas and Ma˜ono said "the Netherlands had been 'swallowing' Sison for many years yet the (tribunal) had the temerity to tag the Philippine government as responsible for the killings after a short and biased investigation."

With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Christian V. Esguerra

Recommended for killing of John Calvelo on February 5, 2001 is Marvin Nagera Occidental.

"The CHR does not name the accused but identified him as a soldier in the Philippine Navy who was convicted by the RTC Branch-47," Bonita said.

A sequence list provided by the DOJ on the killings of media men showed three more received reports clear the list did not reveal the

IN THE KNOW

*Tribunal founded by Italian socialist*

**By Cyril L. Bonabante**
Inquirer Research

FOUNDED IN 1979 IN BOLOGNE, ITALY, the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) is an international organization independent of any state authority. The tribunal publicly examines complaints of human rights violations. The complaints are usually submitted by victims or groups representing them.

Cases previously deliberated on by the PPT included human rights violations in Algeria, East Timor, Argentina and Afghanistan, and the 1980 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

In 1986, the tribunal demanded a ban on nuclear power, and asked the United Nations to withdraw the International Atomic Energy Agency's mandate to promote nuclear energy for commercial uses.

The PPT was founded by the Lelio Basso International Foundation for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples Basso, a member of the Italian Socialist Party sat in the Italian Tribunal organized by Bertrand Russell to try United States involvement in the war against Vietnam.

The PPT was established a year after Basso's death.

The organization's current president is Italian legislator Salvatore Senese. Its general secretary is Italian physician Gianni Tognoni.

### Case against Marcos

In 1988, the PPT heard a complaint filed by the National Democratic Front and the Moro National Liberation Front against then President Ferdinand Marcos. It found Marcos and the United States responsible for the suffering of the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao.

Among the cases referred by the PPT this year were a theology professor at Harvard University, a law professor at Princeton University and a Nobel Prize-winning biologist.

PPT's verdicts are only recommendatory and not enforceable.

### Aim of PPT

Lorella De Cicco, a member of PPT's Philippine Case Hearing Secretariat and of the human rights group Karapatan, said the PPT sought to make the international community aware of human rights violations in different countries.

The PPT's basic stance on the Philippines tackled the alleged human rights violations of the Arroyo administration. According to the PPT's website, the session is "a major part of the campaign of the Filipino people to expose, condemn and fight the crimes of the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regime and its principal foreign accomplice."

It adds: "The United States, particularly the Bush administration, is the force behind the intensification of exploitation and oppression of the Filipino people as well as the peoples of the world."

### Sison's refuge

Karapatan, one of the organizations that filed the complaint, provided the tribunal with "evidentiary documents," some of which had also been presented to UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston. De Cicco said.

PPT chose The Hague in the Netherlands as the venue of its latest session, which ran from March 21 to 25. The Netherlands has, for 26 years, been the refuge of Communist Party of the Philippines founding chair Jose Ma. Sison.

# China hunger for reef fish emptying Asian seas

Turn to page A3

With the marine stock already exhausted in nearby waters, Hong Kong traders are searching far and wide for increasingly rare fish, such as groupers, snappers and humphead wrasse, spreading the unsustainable fishing habit across the Pacific.

### Highly vulnerable

"Basically it's been like a vacuum cleaner across the region," said Andy Cornish, director for conservation at the WWF Hong Kong. "Stocks near Hong Kong have been depleted decades ago, and the trade has moved further and further away on a quest for fish."

Biologists say reef fish are highly vulnerable to overfishing as they need five to 10 years before reaching breeding age. The trade is difficult to manage because the fishing is mainly carried out on a small scale by rural communities.

"Demand for many reef fishes is just too high ... Wild populations will continue to decline, if nothing is done because the fisheries are typically unmanaged," said Yvonne Sadovy, associate professor at the University of Hong Kong.

"China is where the demand for live reef fish is particularly heavy and where it is also expected to grow ... a lot of the reef fish that come into Hong Kong are exported into China," said Sadovy, a biologist.

Early this month, the HK-based Economics Times issued a warning that 20 species of groupers ... a delicacy often served at Chinese banquets—were threatened with extinction unless conservation measures were introduced.

### Use of cyanide

Large parts of reefs in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are becoming void of marine life as a result of overfishing and the use of cyanide to catch fish alive.

Many fishermen use cyanide, an illegal, exceptionally damaging and wasteful way to catch reef fish, which hide amongst the coral, marine experts say.

The divers squirt the toxin in the reef to stun the fish. Unstable, however, also kills stony coral, the building coral, and only about a quarter of the reef fish survive to make it to restaurants, experts say.

"We did two days of cold diving far from any civilization. Not a single fish was to be seen, not one," Charles Jose told Reuters after a trip to the waters off Leyte in the Philippines last month.

"I was shocked, more than anything ... It's got strong currents, beautiful blue water. There are some bits of nice coral. But there's nothing," said the director of Asiaris Marine, a company specializing in marine surveys and underwater filming.

While many live fish arrive in planes, many also come in on specially designed vessels. Hong Kong trades travel through thousands of islands in the Philippines, Indonesia or Malaysia, collecting the prized fish alive from local fishermen.

Asked how widespread cyanide use, Reinhard Hennerberg, aquarium professor from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology said: "I believe almost all big, undamaged fish are caught with cyanide."

"Cyanide in fish is no longer harmful for people ... It would be nice, if you could say you'd get big health problems. If you eat this fish," said Hennerberg, who has developed a testing device for cyanide in live fish.

### Slow HK response

An official of the Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said it had no plans to check cyanide in imported fish, which could help stem cyanide use.

But the department took the first step last December to manage the trade in a reef fish by requiring import licenses for humphead wrasse, the only coral fish listed as potentially threatened by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

"This is really a new issue," said Cornish from WWF. "If all the countries like the Philippines or Indonesia start developing a management plan for that species, that would be fantastic."

Last December, Philippine authorities arrested about 20 Chinese fishermen suspected of poaching. Their ship Yu Fan was carrying more than 300 live humphead wrasse destined for Hong Kong.

Cheung Chiman, a senior Hong Kong official in charge of endangered species, said thousands of humphead wrasse had arrived in Hong Kong since last December, mostly from Indonesia, although more than half were transported to mainland China.

Humphead wrasse still appears on menus in some restaurants in Hong Kong, although traders say the fish has become increasingly rare and smaller in size.

Asked about endangered species, fish restaurant manager Ge Chao Hua told Reuters: "You have to book a week in advance. There are not many these days." *Reuters*

## Erap gets day pass to receive award

GO ABAD, CLAIM your award. But definitely there will be no desposer at your mother's house, the handicapabayan, yesterday told detained Sen. Jinker Joseph Estrada.

Estrada is set to receive the "Outstanding Citizen of San Juan" award ahead of schedule today when the mayor can't be head as mayor concludes the mayor's long solicitation of his ornamental.

In granting him a 12-hour pass, the judge-in-charge's Special Division said Estrada, to be placed under stringent police security, should be transported at 7 a.m. from his Tirona Hill estate to his house on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan, where his 102-year-old mother, said Imee Marie Ejercito is currently staying.

Presiding Judge Jose Balajadia, the order shall proceed to the ceremonies. He parole at 9 a.m. to receive his award. He will have to be back in Tanay by 5 p.m. on the same day.

The San Juan government, now under the helm of Estrada's son, Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito, originally planned to hold the awarding ceremonies during the grand ball of The Arena, which will start at 7 p.m.

In a petition filed by Estrada's lawyer last week, the deposed president, under trial on plunder charges, also asked the court to allow him to stay overnight at his mother's house on Kennedy Street.

The Special Division, however, took into account the concerns of the police as raised in a memorandum filed with the court yesterday morning by Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon and Chief Supt. Ramon Villaluna, director of the Police Security and Protection Office (PSPO).

Although the police officials did not object to Estrada's request, they suggested that the awarding ceremonies be moved to an earlier time. Jocelyn R. Ty

# GO moves to new headquarters, bares 'war' logo

By Dona Pazzibugan

THE GUNGHE OPPOSITION HAS A NEW LOgo, a new campaign theme and has just moved into its new headquarters.

GO has made the fight against corruption and poverty the cornerstone of its senatorial campaign for the May 14 elections.

Here's the theme, "Kung sa nakaraan, angat sa kahirapan (Right corruption, the answer to poverty)." GO's new logo features the symbols and colors of the Philippine flag. But the positions of the red and blue bars have been reversed—the red bar is above the blue bar.

"That means the people are at war," said campaign manager Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, who has been responsible for giving a sense of organization into GO's campaign.

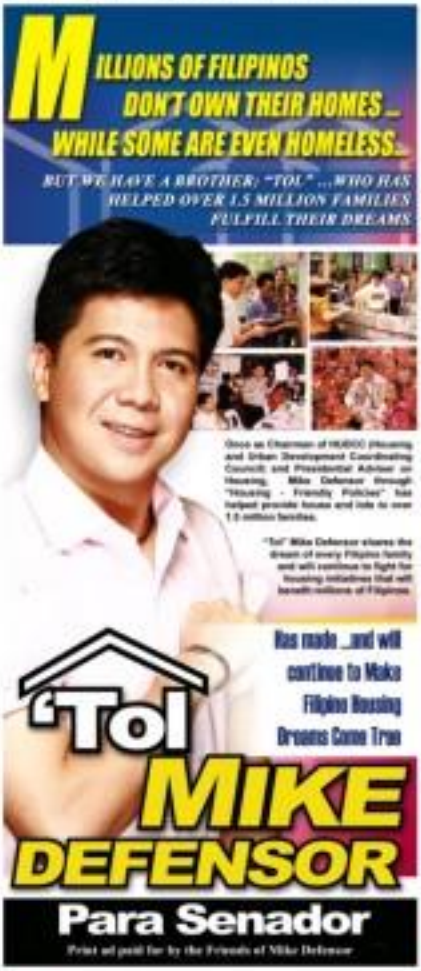
"The Filipino people are at war against corruption, hunger, human rights violations, high prices, poverty. They're at war with the ones responsible [for them]," he said.

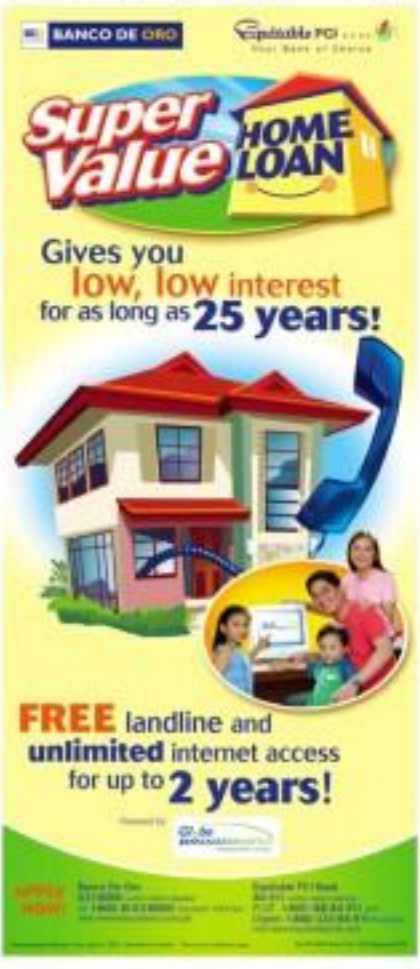
Although their new campaign headquarters in the Manila Bank building on Ayala Avenue, Makati City has been operating for the past three weeks, the official transfer only took place yesterday.

Before the move, GO press briefings were held in the Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) office on Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City.

During the press conference in the new headquarters, they showed a large version of GO's logo while he following words in yellow: "Let's GO: Kunsabe Tayo sa Kinabukasan."

Gonzales said the white yellow symbolized the "bright future that the Filipino people can look forward to if we can get one act together."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

# OPINION

## Let them eat cake

ONE OUT OF EVERY FIVE FAMILIES NATIONWIDE has experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months, according to a survey by the Social Weather Institute. That translates to some 3.4 million households. Overall hunger remains at a record-high 19 percent of the population, the same figure recorded last November.

**EDITORIAL**

In the face of such an incredibly telling figure of mass poverty, all that Malacañang could say is that the poor should stop eating cake. In fact, that seems to be the message of President Macapagal-Arroyo who, despite being a social scientist who's prone to mystifying statistics, seems bent on coming up with mystifying explanations to the troubled portrait of national destitution. Speaking in the rather safe, sanitized perch of the Clark Free Port, the President said that the poor should spend more on essentials rather than luxuries. "I ask our people to spend on the basics first before the luxuries so our children will have enough to eat," she said.

Does that sound insensitive? But if one gave the President the benefit of the doubt, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye put the matter in more crystal-clear terms: "If you cannot give [your children] milk to prepare food, then you should cut down on other expenses." So, the poor are squandering their money on nonessentials? Yes, the spokesman said, and he picked off those unnecessary expenses: "You can cut down on cigarettes and [alcoholic] drinks. Instead of three bottles, one or two would suffice. You can have substantial savings if you cut down on unnecessary expenditures, including text messaging."

Therefore, for the presidential spokesman, the poor don't source their misery alone on cake, they also spend unnecessarily on sin items and text messaging! If the poor are hungry, they're to blame. Hunger is one of the wages of their "sin."

But even sin items are inordinately taxed. And the fact that finance officials are considering a tax on text messaging should show that as far as the vices of the poor are concerned, government is not only on the take. It short-changes them also: that it blames on the poor for the misery of the poor.

But despite all of government's phantasic claims on the causes of poverty, the fact remains that many Filipinos are hungry—and that species of human starvation remains first and last. Not only that, the reality of hunger flies in the face of the President's claim of an economic recovery. Credit for which she has been quick to own. Filipinos are experiencing the benefits of an economic boom, the President has said. They just don't know it yet.

Now, that claim should reveal that the President is as much a Counselor as a Phantom, but the nation wouldn't get nowhere trying to figure out if she were a creature from biblical times or from the Greek Attic age. What must be addressed is gnawing hunger, and the first step to that is to ensure that the poor get three square meals each day.

As an economist, the President should be the first to appreciate the complexities of economic liberalization. While the drives to reform the economy to make it competitive and investment-friendly, she should also ensure that reforms do not waylay the poor in the name of capital and profit. In short, she should ensure social safety nets to protect the poor.

Of course, she can claim that she has dispatched rolling stores to sell cheap goods to the poor. She can claim she has caused to be made available affordable medicine and goods. This may be true, but what's obviously needed is more of the same. To be sure, all of these measures can hardly relieve hunger and misery of the poor. More are needed.

And if the poor are really spending to the inconsolable, in the face of so much privation and indigence, then the President should realize that they do so out of desperation. Poverty that is resilient, intractable and systematic has formed a sense of despair that's alleviated by false measures such as wasteful spending, gambling and other vices. The nation's growing culture of poverty has bread a culture of despair and escapism.

In the end, widespread hunger lets ten the poor condition of freedom and democracy. Because of their poverty, the poor have been consigned to a narrow existence of perpetual want and deprivation. How to stop the vicious cycle of unrestricted opportunities and nearly deterministic scarcity is the challenge facing this government. It is the same challenge that was taken on by the President's own father, Diosdado Macapagal, who said during his time that the task of his administration was to provide "bread and freedom."

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Publisher's Address **Lopez Building, Ortigas Center, Pasig City**
Telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, fax numbers and URL for PDI, INQUIRER.net, Inq7.net

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## Superb disconnect

**VIEWPOINT**

*Juan L. Mercado*

THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN OUR LIVES and what election candidates parrot is obvious in "the most under-appreciated challenge of our times", spreading water shortages.

For World Water Day, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union aired plugs in the Philippines and 54 other countries saying: "Imagine the entire world in a bucket of water. The bad news is that we can use would equal only a spoonful."

Indeed, over 96 percent of this planet's water supply sits safely locked oceans. Worse, water everywhere "but any drop to drink," mutters the parched "Ancient Mariner." New brackish wells and dry irrigation canals signal that the small balance is stressed.

"Due to overpumping of wells, Bicutan coastal areas in Metro Manila measure intrusion into aquifers is now a serious problem," notes the Philippine Institute for Development Studies. The same threat is growing in Cavite and Iloilo. It "holds for Metro Cebu" where salt has contaminated aquifers three kilometers inland. There are a number of signs the Cebuanos just hear.

There's no alternative for water. The body needs a minimum of three liters a day to get by. But more bodies dry into the same wells. There were 13 million Filipinos in 1940, and by 2025, there could be 118.4 million of us.

Signs of scarcity are patent. In August City, one admits, "Nestle" bottled water from Dumoy Davao City in Lapu-lapu City, water peddlers charge P100 per cubic meter. 10 times those with municipal connections. And in Cebu's mountain barangays, families spend four hours a day drawing water from open wells.

"Water is becoming a critical resource," writes Pedro Rufin of the National Water Resources Board. In 26 provinces, a quarter of people, like it or not, must quaff water sold or extracted by 6,116 reticulations, notes the Philippine Human Development Report.

Problem provinces include: Ilocos, Ifugao, Mt. Province, Cagayan, Batanes, North Cotabato, Davao Norte, Bohol, Guimaras, Zamboanga del Norte, Bohol, Quezon, Masbate, Occidental and Oriental Mindoro, Camarines Norte, Aguinaldo, Leyte, Negros Oriental and Occidental, and the entire Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Globally, diarrhea kills more people than TB or malaria. World Health Organization data show "Mortalidad's Revenge" is what they dub the disease. It fleets 1,507 per 100,000 population, mostly in poor areas here. Diarrhea kills more than 1,000 children yearly, major culprits are vigilantes in Davao and Cebu lumped together.

Most victims are children under five. Worse, they can't demand that candidates and officials face up to the consequences of water and sanitation deficits. They still accept promises. "Repeated bouts of diarrhea ... are associated with disadvantages that stretch from cradle to grave," the UN report adds. Victims experience weight loss, stunting, vitamin deficiency, etc. It also results in "cognitive impairment."

"The challenge of 21st-century water governance may prove to be winning the most daunting hand in human history," says the IDS's new study. "Poverty, poverty and the Global Water Crisis," had as the thematic report, "Water: A Shared Responsibility," the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City was reminded. "Governments can't even characterize risks properly ... Some are from observation rules gone amok and bias ... But mismanagement, corruption, inattention can be involved in the emerging water crisis."

Decades ago, Manila Water Co. used a thousand gallons of water. Industry and municipal use accounted for a fifth and a half out of every 10 pumped up. Losses in funneled into irrigation, mostly for food production, which would be crippled if water supplies failed.

Bankrupt irrigation systems in critical food baskets, like Central Luzon, clamp harvests in a country where rainfall of 2,216 is unevenly distributed. Southern Tagalog has the most fresh water available: 580 cubic meters/person, the least.

Despite declining fertility, population will still surge. "Food demand is expected to double," the Food and Agriculture Organization notes. So, will demand for water. "This puts huge pressure on fresh water systems not only for agriculture, but also other uses, including using water for human use, fishery, biodiversity. Already, 30 percent of irrigated lands are degraded."

Political leaders easily underestimate the influence of water scarcity on food production, natural systems and stability," the World Watch Institute's Sandra Postel notes. "Many engineers are surprises may be in store for them."

For the future, policy reform must curb rising down of water users. Water bankruptcy spawns "water bonds" like those of Gujarat, India. As in Pakistan and China, unsustainable water mining could wreck vital links to food and inflated costs of pumping and digging wells.

Within a coherent plan, government must: (1) regulate groundwater extraction, (2) make polluters pay, (3) price water realistically. (4) make it profitable to conserve water and reward efficiency. But how many politicians?

The alternative is Cebu City's "total denial" model. Cebu authorities twice the amount to limited aquifers can recharge. And deep wells are running out. Instead it relentlessly dreaming from 60 million cubic meters today to 137 million cubic meters in 2010. Innocents for sale? Any parallels? What water problem? asks Mayor Tomas Osmeña.

Burying one's head in the sand is equally discouraged. To paraphrase Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez's comment: When the rich were dying, it was time; when they were amused how they looked just like the poor.

(E-mail: jmercado-mkd@pmail.com.)

## We're back to martial law, part II

**THERE'S THE RUB**

*Conrado de Quiros*

AFTER SAYER OSMEÑO CAME THE INQUIRER publisher and editors.

Barely had the authorities reeled from their labors in arresting the chief representatives of this country's leading daily-Isa, Mayor Mitos, Mina, Ping—when they were screaming the editors of this country's leading newspaper, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

"It was the first time the justice system reached us first," Inquirer publisher Isagani Yambot would say sorely later on. If that statement sounds cryptic, it is only in that it was not the first time justice of the kind she [under secretary is famous for] worked so fast, it was the second, and in less than a week. The first time was in the case of Ocampo. Justice worked so fast then the authorities even got ahead of the judge who was saying Ocampo need not be brought to court.

But the Inquirer case was certainly the first time the authorities acted with mind-boggling dispatch in a case of libel. So swiftly did they detain its publisher and editors they did not even inform them that the cases had reached court. Its chief lawyer had received no letter or even a telephone call to that effect. It was the first time the publisher and editors of a newspaper dedicated to not accepting the opposition were harrowingly outscooped. There detention came as complete news to them. It was the unnerving news of the arrest. They hadn't had any news and neither, for that matter, did the authorities thinking and before acting.

The detention of the Inquirer editors, as everyone knows by now, stemmed from libel. Arroyo's libel suit against them for articles that supposed that she's unpregnant and betraying to him. Normally, before the judge could issue an arrest warrant, Inquirer staffers would already have posted bail upon being notified of the court resolution to preempt that pass. The Inquirer never received such notification, at least not until after the editors had already been detained. Bail had had nothing to do with it. Strictly hide had everything to do with it.

"From what we gathered," said Inquirer lawyer Ani Pagbilaganan, "when the resolution was released, the next day the warrant of arrest was issued. Normally it takes five days for it. You have to verify the cases until actually it's time to probable cause." What, the judge figured the "suspects" would skip town he had to have them rushed to purchase? What, the judge figured the "suspects" would be exiled by the Inquirer to Israel? Inquirer executive Jose Bayan would say later on that he had been abroad to escape the public's wrath?

The latter quite incidentally, though a non-response response to the "Battle Cares" scandal (the public detained her more than her husband) offers anecdotal proof that the First Gentleman is a public figure. If he weren't, why should his existence be of any concern to governments, least of all to his wife?

Instead of being summoned in court, Gen Dumlao and the editors were ordered to go to Station 3-1 in Pasig town to "voluntarily surrender." Once in the station, they had to wait for half an hour for the judge to order their release and another half hour to fill out the release forms. The ordeal took only an hour, but an hour is eternity to the innocent. No, an hour is eternity to those who are being punished for a lofty calling. I understand that my friend Jorge Arcita, the opinion editor, was looking on count of gout at the time. I can swear to the fact that an hour is an eternity of utter hell to that man.

It would all be very funny, except that it's not. Only Mike Arroyo and his minions will see the joke. I comprehended completely with Tessy Sumsuera when he raised a clenched fist in his way out. Another patriot, the one that has to do with the middle finger, might have been more appropriate. But it also might not have resulted in a front-page photo in this newspaper. Unlike their seniors, the Inquirer publisher and editors believe in using power responsibly. Even when they're on the receiving end of the power publisher and editors like to be classy.

But it's the disarray upon democracy is dying, if not already dead, in this country. The dirt of Rights might as well not be there. We can assemble peaceably to protest government, but only under government's discretion of peaceable. Free Bayan in your cradle, but only until Jovito Palparan and Eli think you are operating out of political activity being in the province.

You'll never think during this for the leading members of the leading newspaper of this country to death's throat in and a warning, or, hell, issue a threat, to the journalists of this country to look at what would happen to them if they continued to believe—and say—that the President is a thief and her husband is a crook. I've been saying this until again that unless we protested dirtily the iniquities that were happening outside of the papers—the killings in particular—those iniquities would descend on the capital, and soon. They have.

I have no use for tribes or private thinks the justice and has been known to flatter Inquirer and the publisher and editors of the Inquirer, injustice will hits the day—or fast—the evening night. To imagine that Ocampo is just a leftist and the Inquirer is just the competition what happened to them cannot possibly happen to us is to guarantee it will happen to us. Take it from the Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller's famous words about the Holocaust:

"First they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I was a Christian. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. And then they came for the Catholics and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

"And then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak up."

# Unlike rabble-rousers, Zubiri has solid bill

FORMER SEN. JOSE OSMEÑA SRG QUITE-correctly in saying that the Senate Opposition-ists did more in leading a hard-core organizing activities in the provinces due to the lack of opposition leaders at the grassroots. This is true in most places and the dismal state of political machinery may be one reason why Erap Joseph Estrada (TV) in the end may prove to be better known as the president who was impeached during the second TV presidential election campaign. Other than big money, was it defiance of the wrath of Malacañang Palace and House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles. The two have only identified as a united administration between 12,000 to 25,000, was carried around the country in expensive caps by the crowds. The two veteran politicians want up for the local elections is said to be unprecedented in Davao.

Star columnist Ernesto Maceda nevertheless pointed out that for all their noise and rabble-rousing, Representatives Alan Peter Cayetano and Prospero Nograles have failed to all their false pieces in the House in the three-year period. Instead they have resorted to office-hitch explanations as an excuse of little done colleagues lavished. She said the two were busy getting media mileage for their scathing remarks against the administration, but they have failed to produce any bill for the preservation of leaders." By contrast, Bukidnon Rep. Migz Zubiri had been busy putting together his landmark Sandoval bill that was signed into law late last year. Indeed, Zubiri has been "working the ground" months before the start of the environmental crusade.

* * *

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Eric John is reportedly coming next month to look deeper into the unsolved killings in the country. Sources in Malacañan, who followed the hunting condensed two weeks ago by the first Asia and Pacific affairs subcommittee chair in the US House of Representatives, note that John seemed to be the only one who is not hearing sympathetic to the Philippine government. Sources say the sub-committee chair, Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer, who had once recently only left-wing extremists, notably didn't seem to care about the killings. In fact, quite to the contrary, she said in a statement that the US government's focus on this issue should be more balanced than what Bataan's watchdog's give.

* * *

During the recently concluded conference conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs with all Philippine ambassadors and consul-generals at the Manila Hotel last week, I was able to obtain from Ambassador to Washington Pilly Isn a copy of his statement submitted from the records of the US sub-committee. It detailed all the steps taken by the government to solve the killings. Interestingly, it noted that there are statements issued by UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston and the Male Commission cited in the report seemed more fair than in mere media accounts.

* * *

Gen. Ramos's last line the Male Commission had concluded that "there is no direct evidence, but only circumstantial evidence, linking some elements in the military to the killings" and neither is there "official or institutional policy on the part of the military or its civilian superiors to resort to illegal liquidations." Despite this conclusion, Gen. Ramos also President Macapagal-Arroyo will instructed the Departments of Justice and National Defense "to ensure that the military and police fully cooperate in the investigations." Gen. Ramos is continuing a joint fact finding body. On the other hand, the AFP is said to have issued a directive to all levels of command, threatening to hold any AFP officers accountable for targeting of the killings without a crime or offense committed by subordinates.

* * *

Gen. Ramos noted that last Jan. 15 the AFP General Headquarters created the AFP Human Rights Office (AFPHRO), with orders to plan, implement and assess the programs to protect and promote respect for human rights and international rights laws, and monitor the litigation of cases against the AFP. At present, the AFPHRO is investigating 64 cases of alleged violations of human rights involving AFP personnel, including 17 cases involving 23 victims of extra-judicial killings, 11 cases of illegal arrest, detention and torture, 10 cases of illegal search and seizure, 10 cases of violations of the Geneva Convention, and 16 cases of other violations.

* * *

While our most prominent election lawyers have vigorously fought each other in behalf of their respective clients, they are united on the matter of campaign finance reform. They would like to see a law, or to promote electoral reforms. In essence, March 28 meeting at 8:30 a.m. election lawyers Romulo Macalintal, Atty. Bellarmino Ong Quiambao, Atty. Ernesto Maceda and others will jointly endorse a lawsuit on election laws and rules and regulations at the Century Park Sheraton Hotel in Manila. A fee of P5,000 will be charged per participant to cover snacks and lunch. But it should be worth it since the forum provide an update on the latest practices and jurisprudence on election laws, how to prevent cheating, rules in ballot appreciation, etc., with acts of demonstration of the process and participating media myths wrap. This is a "learn-by-doing" so the lawyers are making their professional fees and donating the proceeds to the Diocese of Parañaque for the construction of its diocesan house. For more details, call Jonathan Fernandez at 0917-858-9901 or Ig Sabio 890-409-1101.

## POLITICAL TIDBITS

*Belinda Olivares-Cunanan*

# Eleven commandments for 'green' voters

A LOBBY THAT ADVOCATES OF ENVIRONMENTAL causes, Manila Archbishop Cardinals Cardinal Ruben has shared weak his political ulterior by urging voters to vote for "green candidates."

It is impossible for sinners, or converts of God's grace, to run for and elected to public office or even participate in campaign for public office are duly committed in caring for Mother Nature and in defending her from being destroyed, contaminated and destroyed by human greed, corporate irresponsibility and political shortsight, and the unsustainable use of the world's dwindling resources," the cardinal said in a statement.

The decree was support behind the ongoing campaign of the Ecowatch Coalition and other green groups in Albay Filipino voters on how to select candidates, both national and local, who will fight for the environment, be part of the anti-logging, anti-mining, anti-dam, anti-incineration, anti-nuclear power, anti-chlorine-bleach and anti-genetic engineering movements.

Ecowatch Chairperson Leon Candidates" with input from the ABS-CBN Youth Environmental Group, Bangon Kalikasan Movement, Concerned Citizens against Mining, Ecological Society of the Philippines, Global Alternatives and Resource Alternatives, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Health Care Without Harm, Haribon PEACE, Modern Earth Foundation, Saggy Bukid as well as from Albay Provincial Board Members.

Cardinal Sandoval described the "Ten Commandments" as "providing useful guidance on what to say and not say to both candidates in terms of environmental truth and justice."

Along with the "Ten Commandments for Responsible Voting" released by the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), the 10-point Guidelines will certainly assist voters in making informed choices that will benefit both democracy and the environment, added the cardinal.

* * *

READ over the "Ten Commandments" on green voting:

1. Thou shall not vote for candidates using the Abo to win. Sorsogon, Gold, Cagbalogo, Vote for candidates who stand for the reversal of the 10-year logging ban in Albay and Bicol Region: Malilipot, Manito, Manoligao, Mapanuepe, Matnog, Mayon, Mobo, Mabinit, Mapaco

# Strange palace claim of 'improving economy'

MALACAÑANG HAILED THE "IMPROving economy" (Business, 3/16/07), crying an SWS (National Statistics Office) survey finding that "nine out of every 10 people were employed." Good news, indeed. Really impressive.

Our Center for Women's Resources, founded in 1982, is a research and training institute for women. Every year, we conduct a study to provide our partners and other institutions a report on the women concerns. We also have NGO as a source. We have usually two contrary findings, that is why we find the Palace report curious.

How can the current administration explain the 1.03 million women jobs, according to the same source, the NSO, are unemployed? How about the increasing number of unpaid and non-economic workers, most of whom are women? (Non-economic workers include Filipinos who invest in the underground economy—e.g., street vendo, small village shops—where they are out of work or not seeking to supplement low salaries.) The government now explains these data such as new definitions of the word "unemployed" which now excludes those who are "not actively seeking work." But in matter how government tries to manipulate the figures with the new definition, still, almost three million Filipinos are unemployed, and 16.4 percent of them are women.

Under the old definition of unemployed, there are now 4.4 million Filipinos with no job. This means an 11.7 percent unemployment rate. Counting in the 12.4 million underemployed (working less than eight hours), there are now 16.8 million Filipinos (45 percent of the labor force) who can hardly find work in the country.

The government also overlooked the high 18.44 percent "replacement rate" in the educational and retail trade and in the hotel and restaurant industry. These industries usually employ women. "Separations" refers to the termination of employment. A large number of such terminations involve "women-jobs."

The labor force is growing at 1.5 percent per year. Accordingly, government statistics, from May 2004 to April 2006, close to 700,000 jobs were created, and from May 2006 to April 2006, around 805,000. This means that only an average of 1.5 million jobs (seasons surges, the government had a total backlog of 3.402 million in the two-year period) are created so.

No wonder, an average of 1,000 Filipinos leave the country every day. Out of 10 Filipinos who leave, seven are women who usually work as domestic helpers, entertainers or hospital workers.

These hard facts show that the incoco administration's claims to create jobs has been done in an economy driven by OFW remittances and corruption earnings. I wonder how Malacañang's latest $100 employment claim could be taken as an indicator of an "improving economy"?

**—MARY JOSSLA GUIAN,**
**executive director,**
**Center for Women's Resources,**
**117-A Scout Fuentebella St.,**
**Samanlang, Quezon City**

# DPWH not involved in Pantao Port project

THE REPORT "IN THE NEWS ITEM on town by Herman Bondoc, titled, "2 dead, 3 missing, killed in P350.40 port mess" (Business, 3/16/07).

According to DPWH Region 5 Director Nilo Rodes, the Department of Public Works and Highways has nothing to do with the construction of the Pantao Port, and has not implemented any project (funding or else) part which was alleged in the news report to already "pulverized."

Director Rodes said that if it can be the dredging, undertaken before Typhoon Reming, which required only a maximum depth of 6m, at most, the damage could have been worse.

**—ELIZABETH FILOMIO,**
**OIC-chief,**
**Public Information Division,**
**Department of Public Works and Highways**

# LETTERS

## Administration playing dirty politics

THE ARREST WARRANT ISSUED AGAINST Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and the harassment of progressive party-list like Anakpawis and Gabriela are more of the dirty tactics of the administration, which is acting hand in glove with its minions in court and may draw from gaining a seat in Congress.

It is alarming to note how quickly an arrest warrants was issued against Ocampo for a crime allegedly committed 23 years ago and how the Philippine National Police (PNP) can so convenient remember, while we have yet to see them subduing the crime rate and dedication in bringing justice for the victims of extrajudicial killings.

The case against Ocampo is also part of the administration's effort to dish the blame for the ever-escalated killings on the Left and many from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which is genuinely perceived to be behind the numbers, in denial of uncovering the report of both the Melo Commission and UN rapporteur Philip Alston, the AFP has once again turned to saying that some were victims of blaming the victims of the killings and human rights abuses to the perpetrators. They point to a camp that has arrested 20 years ago and then show questionable and unreliable "evidence."

The harassment of Ka Satur by the PNP and of party-list members to schemes orchestrated by the AFP, as well as the constant and detention of Crispin Beltran, only proves the government's lack of sincerity in promoting democracy.

What the arrest warrant also shows is how dirty the administration's plan politics. It is failure is the equivalent of accumulators and administrations supported party-lists, let it play them in its efforts to win the people's votes—something that Ronnie Mercado and other progressive party-lists have inspired them to.

**—ADEL VERGARA,**
**Administrative officer,**
**League of Filipino Students,**
**116 Speaker Perez St., Quezon City**

# Why did DEA junk passport project that would entail no cost to gov't?

THE REPORT IN THE STORY ON THE TRO (temporary restraining order) issued by the Supreme Court in relation to the Machine Readable Passport (MRP/V) Project. (Inquirer, 3/14/07)

In the interest of truth and justice, allow us to present the facts and issues involved.

First, why does the Department of Foreign Affairs insist on spending P2 billion of public money for the ePassport Project when private funding is available through the MRP/VHOF?

On May 15, 2006, the DFA-MRP/V Advisory Board, in a memorandum submitted to Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, recommended (1) the approval of the Country Site Facility and (2) the use of the P2B fund.

On the basis of the negotiation and evaluation report of the DFA and Consensus that the use satisfies the minimum requirements of the project, the Advisory Board, in its meeting held on 9 May 2006 decided to recommend to the Secretary the approval of the first Well Assist in the Grant of Facility Site of the MRP/V Project," the memorandum stated.

On the DFA web, 22 Bar-wide, it said: "In view of the arrest findings from countries that the use of the electronic chips necessitates further study, the Advisory Board agreed that the Department should maximize the use of the 32 Bar Code Biometric storage medium and seek the upgrade to ePassport within 3 years' time from the implementation of the project in accordance with the original terms of the amended BOT (contract)."

The memo emphasized that "The Advisory Board believes that should the Secretary gives his approval to the foregoing recommendations before 25 May 2006, there is a possibility that the first machine readable passports will be issued before the year's end. Likewise the positive action of the Secretary will enable the preparation to proceed with the project."

The DFA can use this sum of consensus Amores despite the glaring fact that the MRP/V Project would have been in operation by the end of 2006 at no cost to the government and to the Filipino taxpayers.

We believe that certain personalities in the DFA prevented Secretary Romulo from making the right decision. The task at hand is to throw out these people and to file graft charges against them.

In closing, there is no need to undertake the ePassport Project. Instead, we spend P2 billion of taxpayer money use to enrich a few suppliers and corrupt DFA officials.

**—ARNALDO VARGAS,**
**(Ret), PCA Intelligence**

# US group vows support for activists

RE: IN THE FIRST QUARTER STORM (Newsstand/PDI/3/15/07), confirm in the strongest terms possible the arrest of Satur Ocampo on trumped-up charges. As comrades in the Philippines before and during martial law, we are appalled by this witch-hunt and the anti-communist crusade that the US-Arroyo regime has been pushing against progressive individuals like Ocampo and party-list representatives like Anakpawis, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Kabataan, Suara Bangsamoro and others.

We express our militant solidarity with our comrades who are now being persecuted in the Philippines and we vow that we will campaign tirelessly for their speedy release and freedom. Mabuhay, Bayang Bayani!

**—PONG DE LEON,**
**137 Glendale Blvd.,**
**Los Angeles, CA 90026, USA**

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*All letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.*


# GSIS Advisory

**TO OUR OLD-AGE PENSIONERS**

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS)—effective January 1, 2007—has implemented the faster and more secure way of crediting monthly old-age pension benefits directly to the pensioners' eCard ATM accounts.

With the eCard, old-age pensioners can expect their benefits to be credited to their account on the first working day of every month.

However, despite GSIS' constant reminders, around 17,000 of the 136,145 GSIS old-age pensioners have yet to apply for the eCard. This is the reason why some old age pensioners are not getting their pension benefits.

GSIS would like to clarify that it has NOT SUSPENDED the issuance of monthly old-age pension benefits.

The GSIS renews its appeal to old-age pensioners to enroll for the eCard Plus so that GSIS could resume the crediting of their pension benefits, along with their accrued pensions.

**TO OUR SURVIVORSHIP PENSIONERS**

The GSIS was compelled to suspend the issuance of the monthly pension checks of survivorship pensioners after it discovered discrepancies in its database of survivorship beneficiaries. Suspension was a painful, but necessary step to give way to the cleansing of this database.

As a result, GSIS was able to weed its database of around 58,000 questionable records. The process prevented potential losses of around P1.67 billion annually, due to undeclared records, consisting of, among others, unmatched and invalid ID numbers, invalid dates of birth, and even records with no corresponding claims.

**The database cleansing is now complete. GSIS has started mailing the February, March, and April 2007 checks of survivorship pensioners. They can expect the checks in the coming days.**

Thank you.

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Across the NATION

# Wider lamppost investigation urged

By Jhunrex Napallacan and Irene R. Sino Cruz
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE OMBUDSMAN WAS ASKED yesterday to expand its formal investigation of the alleged overpricing of lampposts and other devices used for the 12th Asean summit to include other officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways and other contractors.

Bet Virginia Mónico-Santiago, acting deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas, said her office could not expect director Ilio Sinsuat of the anti-graft investigation, as panel of investigators assigned to handle the case would be the one to decide on any action related to the plunder case.

The Ombudsman Monday filed a plunder complaint against Sinsuat and other officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) regional office in Metro Manila for allegedly overpricing the P96.8 million lamppost and streetlight project that was implemented for the Asean summit in November last year.

Also recommended for suspension were Magdalene City Mayor Thadeo Osano and Lapulapu City Mayor Arturo Radaza and officials of the engineering departments of the two cities that prepared the program of works and cost estimates.

The fact-finding committee also said there was collusion between the winning bidders and those who prepared the program of works for the project, findings said yesterday.

Santiago explained that she could no longer discuss the case when asked for comments on the omnibus motion submitted yesterday by complainant Cirk Sumerlin.

Sumerlin asked the Ombudsman Visayas to include as respondents in the plunder case the losing bidders of the several contracts for the project as participants in the collusion.

Sumerlin, however, did not reveal the names of the losing bidders in his motion. He said he would leave it to the Ombudsman Visayas to identify the losing bidders.

In a phone interview, Sumerlin alleged that a losing bidder participating in Sept. 14 bidding got 2.5 percent of the project cost. "That is the SOP (standard operating procedure)," he added.

But findings said the DPWH conducted an alternative bidding, which means that this agency chose the bidder without going through the usual process.

findings, however, refused to comment further on the case since she was now beyond the ombudsman's jurisdiction.

She said the case has already been raffled but she could not reveal whether a single graft investigator, or a panel of investigators, would handle the case.

Sumerlin also sought the issuance of a temporary restraining order on the payment of 449 projects undertaken by the DPWH using national funds for the Asean summit.

These include the P83 million closed circuit television camera, fence camera system project, road asphalting and the P1.66 million installation of road safety devices.

MEMBERS of the militant group Sagbuosong Mgbukotsi Kontra Katayoang (SMKK) stage a rally at the office of the Ombudsman asking for a speedy investigation of the lamppost scandal. EARL NOVADOCH

# GMA elder son files bid for 2nd House term

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo on Monday filed his certificate of candidacy for his second term as representative of the province's second district.

Arroyo, President Macapagal-Arroyo's elder son, is running under the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

Lawyer Irene Lumbao, Commission on Elections provincial officer, said no other candidacies has filed a COC for the same position in Arroyo's congressional district so far Monday.

"Hindi ko sir yan," said Arroyo when asked if he will have an opponent.

Separate sources in the second district said Arroyo might run unopposed as he is acceptable to the camps of Gov. Mark Lapid and Board Member Lilia Pineda, who are both running for governor.

In the 2004 elections, Arroyo won overwhelmingly against his lone opponent, Ney Lapid, the elder brother of Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid.

In Pangasinan, Dagupan City Mayor Benjamin Lim on Monday filed his COC as representative of Pangasinan's fourth district.

Lim's decision fulfilled his vow to provide the people an alternative to Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., who is seeking reelection.

"I feel fulfilled because we are doing our duty as a citizen to provide the northeastern Pangasinan people a choice for the leaders that will serve them in the next three years," Lim told reporters.

He was accompanied by his wife, Celia, daughter Irene and his supporters. His son, Brian, whose name had been floated as a likely mayoral candidate in Dagupan, was in Metro Manila reviewing for the bar exams in September.

This was the first time that De Venecia will have a serious opponent after former Vice Gen. Gonzalo Duque challenged the Speaker in the congressional race in 1987. Since 1992, De Venecia virtually ran unopposed.

Lim had told the reporters in earlier interviews that De Venecia's omnibus laws were contributing him to drop his candidacy.

"I feel insulted and I offered because when I have not yet decided to file, I felt so pinoyenid because there were always three thousand voices telling me that I should run," Lim said.

Three "voices" he said, were barangay government.

"And now that I have filed (my COC), again I maintained na yung voices na yun (I think those voices would fade)," Lim added.

Lim, who was formerly with the administration Lakas-CMD, also virtually shut out from allied political parties when De Venecia was also endorsed by Kampi, Nacionalista Peoples Coalition. Liberal Party and other political parties supporting the administration coalition.

"I was also endorsed by the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino," De Venecia said this in a phone interview on Friday.

But Lim managed to get a (the) ng Demokratikong Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) nomination, which was signed by its president, Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay.

Pangasinan Gov. Victor Agbayani and his wife, Amin, also filed their COCs on Monday for representative of the second district and for governor, respectively.

Pangasinan Rep. Mark Cojuangco also filed his COC on Monday. He will run unopposed for representative of the 6th district. Benito Ortajo, Inquirer Central Luzon, and Gabriel Carolinan and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon

## ROUNDUP

### Oil recovery starts

SAGUIL CITY—The salvage firm Smitsh has started siphoning off the bunker fuel from the tanks on board the sunken MT Solar 1 off the coast of Guimaras, presidential adviser Ma Wechers Vinoya Rubel Cascaflatta said yesterday. The crew of Samsara Allied Diving Corporation of the vessel with the help of remotely operated vehicles with robotic arms. Samsara is the war firm specializing in deepwater operations. Solar I sank in August last year, about nine kilometers south of Guimaras in a depth of about 1,100 meters can ging about 2,000 tons of oil. Yesterday, the Allied Shield recovered oil from tank No. 3 of State 1. Cascaflatta said. He said he received information that the oil has been recovered from the other tanks. The retrieval operation takes two days per tank. After Monday, the Allied Shield would have to retrieve the bunker fuel from six remaining tanks on board Solar 1. The operation is estimated to last 12 days barring any unusual incidents. Cascaflatta said. Security chiefs have effectively warded off intruders from the recovery site, he added. Zeth Ginnel, Inquirer Visayas

### Micro finance bank launched

SAGUILCITY— Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. on Sunday launched a microfinance bank that was organized by 14 loan associations that he has been supporting in Pangasinan's fourth congressional district. De Venecia said he gave P10.5 million to the five savings and credit cooperatives out of his congressional fund so they can help their members. The cooperatives—located in the towns of Mangaldan, San Fabian, San Jacinto and Mangaldan and this city—were converted into the First Pangasinan Micro Finance Bank as it can extend collateral-free loans to its members. De Venecia said the Catholic Church has also given P1 million, bringing its seed money to P11.5 million. Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon

### F.C. Tapalla, 92

FRANCISCO C. Tapalla, husband of the late Asuncion Rizon, both of Lasa City, Batangas, passed away last March 25 in Mandaluyong City. He is survived by his children Victoria, Virgilio and Aileen, Amado, Marino and Ibarra; brother, and grandchildren Beatrice, Andrea, Erika, Erbal and Ella. Burial is scheduled on Wednesday, March 28 after the 8 a.m. Mass at Floral Garden, Lipa City, Batangas

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# Case filed over ₱1B in uncollected quarry tax

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Pampanga Rep. Gus Jaoelito Canlas yesterday filed a complaint for graft against Gov. Mark Lapid and provincial treasurer Angel Yabut for their alleged failure to collect between ₱675.2 million and ₱1 billion from quarry taxes since 2004.

In a 23-page complaint filed at the Office of the Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon, Canlas cited officials of the provincial treasurer's office, from the corporate arm of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and from the municipal treasurer's offices of Floridablanca, Porac and Mabalacat.

Lapid's father, Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, created the task force in 1998 when he was governor. By then, Pampanga enjoyed an abundant supply of sand spewed by Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruption and washed down by rains from the slopes past Capas, Tarlac.

"There is clear and convincing proof of the evident bad faith and gross inexcusable negligence by the respondents," Canlas said, referring to the failure of traditionals of sand actually used by the town governments and the revenues they derived from them.

Auditor Angelo from 2000 to February 2007 showed that the town earned P65.4 million by collecting a regulatory fee of P30 on every truckload of sand that averaged 1,145-fully.

Records from Porac, the Lapids' hometown, showed that the local government generated P28.9 million from out of the P40 geological fee from 2005 to 2006. The number of truckloads averaged 963 a day during the two-year period.

On the other hand, the provincial government reported collecting a total of P68.2 million through a P300 fee, it. Records from July 2004 to February 2007. The amount of truckloads averaged 331 truckloads of sand daily.

Canlas said the P682 million in revenue earned by the DENR's Natural Resources Development Corp. from 1999 to 2001 showed an average of 1,181 truckloads a day.

"We can borrow (The thing speaks for itself). Thus, from the two (towns) alone, if the respondents were not guilty of bad faith and gross inexcusable negligence in the performance of their duties and responsibilities to ensure the efficient and efficient collections of quarry taxes, the province would have collected and generated revenues from quarry taxes alone at an average of ₱529.4 million a year or ₱873.2 million for three years," Canlas said in the complaint.

If taxes from more than 1,000 truckloads of sand from other sand-rich towns like Mabalacat, Mexico, Floridablanca and Lubao were also included, the provincial government could have earned almost ₱1 billion in the last three years, he said.

Provincial administrator Fidel Severino, who is also the governor's campaign manager, denied the allegation of irregularities.

"Again, this is politically motivated," Severino told the Inquirer.

"I am wondering why the vice governor would file this complaint against Governor Lapids. 10 government officials and four private contractors for five alleged double-funded and ghost road projects. They denied the complained wrongdoing in a counter-affidavit.

Asked on the timing of the recent case, Canlas said: "I have been waiting for the congressional committees to make recommendations but apparently they will not be finishing their reports on time. So we have to act now before. Besides, there is no wrong time to do the right thing."

quarry case when he did not even committee on the anti-illegal collected taxes appeared by the fact that financial committee and the provincial board that passed the quarry income for 2006 and 2007 at ₱200 million annually," Severino said.

He said there was "acting with spite" because he failed to get the support of the board to transfer the NEDC the task of collecting quarry taxes and he failed to get the support of two congressional candidates in pitching down the Lapids.

On March 13, Canlas filed a first graft complaint against the Lapids. 10 government officials and four private contractors for five alleged double-funded and ghost road projects. They denied the complained wrongdoing in a counter-affidavit.

ANOTHER OIL SPELL
Fishermen of Barangay Sto. Niño in Toledo City clean their fishing boat from bunker oil from a ship that docked for repairs and caught fire at the dockyard of the Visayan Industries in Balamban, Cebu.

# Ex-customs exec faces daughter of Baby A

EDMUND

GINGOOG CITY—A FORMER official of the Bureau of Customs will face the daughter of socialite Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas in the congressional race in the third district of Misamis Oriental.

Lawyer Gallant Soriano, former deputy commissioner of the BoC, filed his certificate of candidacy before the Commission on Elections here on Monday.

Soriano is the second candidate for the position to file his COC after Rachel Arenas, daughter of Baby Arenas. Two other candidates in the district—Governor Tolagan Jr. and Representative Myrol Sacoudio de Vera—were expected to file their COCs this week.

Soriano will run with the governor's sister-in-law Jaime Ng Yapson, wife of outgoing Gov. Victor Aghamon, who is running for governor.

Soriano said he would run with a complete slate for mayor, vice mayor and councilors in the two towns and one city in the district.

Soriano said he earlier asked all local and national candidates in his district to sign a covenant for honest, orderly and peaceful elections if they "has nobody has taken (up) the challenge."

"Let's give Hope a chance to work, and if someone of incidents happen, that could be the time to blame the dirtiest as an area of immediate concern. As of now, there are no reports of election-related incidents," he said.

The Philippine National Police earlier assured that San Carlos City be classified as an area of immediate concern because of previous election-related cases of violence. The Comelec, however, said it saw no reason yet to declare San Carlos under its control.

San Carlos City Mayor Julius Somoso, in an earlier interview, rejected the police's proposal "because (San Carlos) is a peaceful city and there are no untoward incidents reported) (the election time)."

Quezon, a mayor, the elder Arenas had warned there would be bloodshed if her daughter was left out of the process to ensure the official candidacies of the administration for seats in the House. —Rolando Fabreo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

# Priest enters gov race as 'alternative' bet

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A CATHOLIC priest on Monday said he would run for governor of Pampanga as he was ready to hold himself as an "alternative moral choice" to reelectionist Gov. Mark Lapid and Board Member Lilia Pineda in the May elections.

Fr. Eddie Panlilio, 53, confirmed his decision in a phone interview as he proceeded to attend the general assembly of the Pampanga clergymen.

"I have heeded the clamor of the laity to serve God's people by running for public office," Panlilio said. "An extraordinary situation like this in Pampanga requires a radical option."

Panlilio was referring to an assessment by laypersons and civil society leaders that a number of voters in Pampanga did not seem to be choosing between Governor Lapid and Pineda due to the issues of corruption and illegal gambling linked to those two candidates.

In the general assembly, he said he would present a letter to Archbishop Paciano Aniceto of San Fernando to request dispensation from priestly ministry while I try to do this obligation."

Another letter is meant for the province's more than 120 priests to tell them of his plan, not necessarily to ask them to campaign for him.

A GROUP of Catholics and lay leaders in Pampanga is pushing Fr. Eddie Panlilio to join the gubernatorial race to give Kapampangans an alternative candidate.

"No indigay ko (As a sign of support, I will inform them of my decision)," he said.

Aniceto said he would "not endorse" Panlilio's candidacy but will "respect his decision," indicating that the priest will not be officially supported by the local Roman Catholic Church.

Two contemporaries of Panlilio—Pampanga Bishop Roberto Mallari and Bishop Angelito Lampon—had been earmarked by his backers, and they would defer to appeal Panlilio's decision especially if they were "made out of community discernment."

"This will be the first time in Pampanga's election history, though, that a Catholic priest will be lobbied to the gubernatorial contest, a check with local church stewards showed.

Panlilio has been in the priesthood for 26 years. He served as secretary to Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, a former Pampanga bishop.

Military agents abducted Panlilio in 1981 but he was freed after civil-libertarians clamored for his release.

He went on to lead the archdiocese's social action programs, heading also the church's emergency and rehabilitation programs for the victims of Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruptions and lahar flows. —Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

# Pichay: Opposition bets who fear cheating are stupid

LUCENA CITY—CANDIDATES, particularly those in the opposition, who still run despite fears they would be cheated are stupid and need psychiatric care, a candidate of the administration ticket from Unity said here.

Prospero Pichay, who is one of the 12 candidates of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Senate ticket, said candidates who feel they would be cheated but continue to run are crazy.

"Why would they still run if they believe that they will just be cheated? I would be crazy to run. If I know that I will only be cheated. That's stupidity," Pichay said over 35 FMs, a TV program aired over local cable station KTV6.

He said "the opposition just wants to condition the minds of the voters that if they lose in the May 14 elections, they are cheated."

Pichay said the reason the political opposition is holding local and national candidates "is because they believe that there was no cheating in 2004 and they also believe that there will be no cheating in 2007."

"If they believe that there was cheating in 2004 and they also believe that there would be another cheating in 2007, they would be crazy to run for senatorial office. They should better commit a psychiatrist," said the Lakas congressman from Batangas did Sol.

Pichay classified the candidates in this year's midterm elections into two categories. Those who believe that there will be no cheating and those who believe that there will be cheating.

However, reelectionist Senator Edgardo Angara admitted that election cheating is still possible.

### 'Wholesale cheating'

"Say most of them is only 'retail' that only happens in some localities. But I believe, there is no deliberate policy by any administration to have a massive, systemic, wholesale cheating," said Angara.

Team Unity senatorial candidate Mike Defensor, said, "The choice is our own, the choice is with the people. As God's will, are (Team Unity) hope that we all can win."

The administration campaign rally was held at the tri-municipal Quezon Convention Center at the bank of the provincial capitol building.

As early as 9 a.m., delegates from the province filled the more than 10,000 seating capacity of the venue.

Packed inside and bottled water were seen being distributed among the delegates composed mostly of farmers, fishermen and members of urban poor groups.

"I brought my entire family because of the free food. Genuinely told at that we will also be given allowance for our provincial fare," Lauren Reyes, a resident of impoverished district in this city told the Inquirer. Delfin Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

# 2 Cojuangco women face off in Tarlac

TARLAC CITY—A BATTLE BETween two members of the Cojuangco family looms in the first congressional district of Tarlac.

Gov. Kristelle Mahilang Pilipino (Kampi) would "hold fire" to Jose "Chino" Cojuangco, daughter of Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. and Senator Teofisto "Tito" Guingona "Tingting" Cojuangco, as the party's candidate in the electoral. The post was held by Jose in from 1961 to 1969 and again from 1987 to 1998.

Chino, a commercial model, will face her cousin in-law, Mona "Nikki" Prieto-Cojuangco, a professional model before she became the wife of outgoing Tarlac rep. Gilberto Cojuangco Teodoro Jr.

In a telephone interview, former Tarlac Board Member Bey Bay, secretary general of the local Kampi chapter, said aside from Chino is led by the congressional seat, her father, Jose Jr., would run for governor of the province.

Bay would be Jose Jr.'s running mate.

Bay said Tingting, who retired in Tarlac governor from 1995 to 1998, had taken a leave of absence as national chair of Kampi to give way to former and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno and to help out in the candidacies of her husband and daughter.

Teodoro, in a phone interview, confirmed with reporters he has certain of candidacy on March 28, regardless of who his opponent would be.

On the same day, Puno is expected to induce new members of Kampi here, which include Chino.

Bay said Chino would seek political office by "continue the selfless service of Ge Cojuangco to their home province."

The Inquirer verified the court registration details of Chino and Nikki with the Commission on Elections but the Comelec's database did not show the names of Chino.

Nikki, on the other hand, is registered in Barangay Matapian of Paniqui town under precinct 0036, the same precinct where Chino was once registered as a voter.

Bay said Chino had been "deactivated" from the list of voters for failing to exercise. However, she has already applied for reactivation at the Comelec office in Manila and that she has already been approved.

Bay said they were just waiting for the release of Chino's "yellow card" to certify the reactivation. —Aldwin Arcega, Inquirer Central Luzon

# 7 fighting for last 4 slots in Magic 12

From page A1

Mangahas said either six or seven (6), two independent and either three or four (3) candidates survey in the "nominal winning circle," as opposition candidate Gonzalez and administration candidates Isidro were tied in 12th place.

In fourth to sixth places were (4) candidates—endorsement Sen. Panfilo Lacson (42 percent), Barangay Rep. Francis Escudero (40 percent) and Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano (39 percent).

In seventh and eighth places were endorsement Senators Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (37 percent) and Edgardo Angara (32 percent), both administration candidates.

The "statistical connection" for the last four seats were Honasan (29 percent), Arroyo and Aquino, who were tied at Nos. 10-13 (26 percent); Sotto and Gonzalez, who were at Nos. 13-15 (26 percent); Pimentel (25 percent); and Madrigal (23 percent).

Defensor could join the winning circle because the survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

LEGARDA

VILLAR

PANGILINAN

LACSON

## Angara posts biggest gain

The survey showed that Angara posted the biggest gain, reversing the Magic 12-from-his previous 12th-14th places in the Feb. 22-27 survey.

Angara's rise was at the expense of Gonzalez, who dropped three ranks, and Sotto, who dropped four ranks, according to Mangahas.

Tied in 12th place, Isidro and Gonzalez were separated by "a meaningless quarter-point," the 5400 chief said.

## Sonia Revs

At a statistically significant distance were Sonia Roco (SO, 19 percent) and Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri (TI, 18 percent). Their positions were unchanged from the February opinion poll.

TI candidates Vicente Sinapayan and Gene Montano were tied at Nos. 18 and 19 (17 percent), while Basilan del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay, one of the biggest TV ad spenders, was at No. 20 (16 percent).

They were followed by Associate Justices Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez (TI, No. 21; Richard Gutierrez Dad.) and Teresita Aquino-Oreta (TI), Nos. 22-23; Anna Dominique Coseteng (SO), No. 24; Luis "Chavit" Singson (TI), No. 25; and Joselito Cayetano (SOL), No. 26.

Compared with last month's survey, Sinapayan and Pichay each gained two ranks, while Gonzalez fell four ranks, and Coseteng, three.

## Respondents to cast ballots

The survey also found that 88 percent of the respondents said they would "certainly" vote in the May 14 elections.

Nine percent said they would "probably" vote, one percent said they "might be busy," and one percent said they would "definitely not vote."

A tabulation of the responses based on those who said they would "certainly" vote produced no change in the ranking of senatorial candidates, except by Gonzalez, who would be "functionally above" Zubiri in their 12th-place tie, according to SWS.

The survey items on the choice of candidates were not commissioned, SWS said.

The names of candidates debated by the Commission on Elections were excluded in the new poll.

## Media sponsor

The Philippine Daily Inquirer is the print media sponsor of the March, April and May rounds of the SWS pre-election surveys, which are aimed at tracking voter preferences for the candidates for national positions in the May elections. *Ruth Pedrosa, Inquirer Research*

# Abalos brother leads group of tricycle drivers

From page A1

ato Abalos to take the older brother of Benjamin Abalos Jr., chair of the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales yesterday raised the issue before the Comelec, questioning the legality and propriety of the body according a top-ranked party-list organization in holding a close relative of its chair.

"There's a conflict of interest," Rosales yesterday told the Inquirer in an interview. "My gosh, you are the chair of the Comelec ... Its impudence itself says that nominees unbeholden to party-list organizations must themselves be either tired of a marginalized [sector]."

Mario Abalos is a director of Byaheng Pinoy, a group of tricycle drivers in Mandaluyong City where the Comelec chair lives and had served as mayor, according to Rosales. She said the group had been organized by the city's elite unique.

## Dubious backgrounds

"All we want to say then is it is of no importance to you that a brother of no less than the chair of the Comelec is a high-ranking leader of a party-list group recently accredited?" she said in a letter to Abalos yesterday.

Rosales identified Byahenq Pinoy as one of at least 11 party-list groups accredited by the Comelec despite their allegedly "dubious" backgrounds.

At least four of them—Abay Pinoy, Bahay Ati, Kilusan Sambayanan, and Ang Kasangga—were also newly forming Ugnayan ng Mayors, the Abalos-tabang-backed group behind the ballot plan to revise the Constitution via a signature campaign last year.

## Organized by Malacañang

In her letter, Rosales cited a recent media interview by the Abalos brothers, who supposedly admitted that the group had been partly organized by Malacañang's Office of External Affairs (OEA).

Citing another media interview she said was less than flattering, Secretary Marcelo Fernan II of the OEA had admitted "helping" Apbing, a regional party arbour secretary, groomed a said in to be the first himself.

Rosales said the OEA's known function was to "reach out and help NGOs (nongovernment organizations) through a variety of programs and services."

"How we find the facilities, OEA [assistant secretary], reaching me and providing answers to himself," the outgoing Akbayan representative told Abalos.

## Investigate

"You's this a matter investigating relationship, Mr. Chairman?" asked Rosales, who is other third-party-list term in the House of Representatives.

The party-list system is enshrined in the 1987 Constitution to enable marginalized sectors to take part in legislation.

Since 1998, voters have elected into Congress representatives of national, regional and sectoral parties under the party-list system. Each party-list group is entitled to not more than three seats.

## Meticulous

Party-list representatives should constitute 20 percent of the total number of members of the House of Representatives.

In a previous response to another Rosales letter, Abalos said: "No to stand-behind agency, Comelec, in screening the various groups, meticulously studies the voluminous records and documents it submits in support of its petition."

"We decide based on evidence presented, whether for or against the above parties, not on mere speculation and hearsay. We look beyond the personalities involved as we, more importantly, lay emphasis on the achievements and track record of the organizations as a whole in representation of the 'marginalized and marginalized,'" Abalos said.

## Lack of scrutiny

In the interview with the Inquirer, Rosales described as "funny" the manner by which the Comelec was supposedly accrediting party-list groups.

"It seems that the chair, so far, has not addressed [the matter] and even denied [the questionable groups] in accordance with the 'respect of the law,'" she said.

"The very fact that so many of these party-list organizations of dubious backgrounds have been accredited raises suspicion."

In her letter, Rosales also questioned the accreditation of Kilusan, an organization of convicts-at-large chair sometimes is convicted child rapist. Bonnie Adaspio, a former congressman of Batchoyoga del Norte.

"How can convicts be qualified to organize themselves into a party-list group on the basis of their track record?" she asked.

"It is not a law that convicts are not qualified to vote or run for any position in any election? Is this not nothing a mockery of an electoral instrument intended to empower the poor?" Rosales said.

## Platitudes disqualified

A group of education platitudes yesterday expressed by pro-coup companies is also planning to appeal its disqualification by the Comelec.

Philip Salvo, president of the PEP Coalition, questioned the junking of the group's accreditation by the Comelec's Second Division, saying PEP was earlier accredited by the poll body's First Division.

Last week, the Comelec junked PEP Coalition's accreditation based on a complaint filed by another party-list group, the Alliance for Nationalism and Democracy (Andi), which had opposed its intention to field retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan as nominee.

"We went through the process and submitted all the requirements of the Comelec. So why has our registration as a party-list been cancelled? What have we done against Andi and General Palparan? Do we look like communists?" Piccio said.

The PEP Coalition started out as a group of parents who were victimized by Pacific Plans Inc. of the Vicherueles family after the company filed for rehabilitation two years ago. The company had said it could not pay the educational plans that the parents bought for their children.

Since then, the PEP Coalition has adopted victims of College Insurance Plan, Platinum Plans and The Professional Group.

*With a report from Akiko Pope*

# Esperon on new Leyte mass ...

From page A1

"If we are able to prove that these victims were indeed killed by the NPA, then we can say that it seemed there were many kangaroo courts and proceedings happening there which are [more] serious crimes," Esperon said.

Asked if the discovery of a second NPA grave site would affect Esperon's case, he said he was not saying that the latest report of an NPA grave site was connected with the murder charges against Ocampo.

On Sunday, May Rowena Torres, Army spokesperson, said that elements of the Army's 43rd Infantry Battalion had discovered a second gravesite in Hilongos, Southern Leyte, on March 21 and that it contained the remains of as many as 15 alleged spies slain by the communist New People's Army.

But Lt. Col. Mario Lucayan, 43rd IB commander, dismissed the report.

"I was surprised when I was told about the TV report saying that we had found a (second) mass grave," Lucayan told the Inquirer by telephone yesterday.

However, Lucayan said there had been information that 18 to 15 alleged victims of the NPA purge of suspected military spies had been buried in Hinapacan and Hindang Municipalities in Southern Leyte but that their remains had not been found.


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NEWS

# Lakas, Kampi back Vilma; Sanchez left out in cold

By Michael Lim Ubac

FINALLY, THE TWO WARRING PARTIES OF THE Administration coalition have found common ground.

Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos is the official gubernatorial candidate to win-rich Batangas of both the ruling party Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats and the Bahay Iikas ng Mahayong Pilipino (Kampi) in the May elections.

After Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita announced that Santos was Lakas' official candidate for the gubernatorship, Cabinet member Sen. Ralph Recto followed suit.

Ermita is Lakas' regional chair for Southern Tagalog, which includes his hometown Batangas, while Villabona is president of Kampi, the party of President Benigno Aquino.

Ermita's son Edwin, a banker, will be Santos' running mate.

During the administration's Team Unity's campaign sortie in Block last Friday, Villabona announced in the presence of all 12 candidates that Kampi would also support Santos' candidacy.

## Surprised

Governor-to-be Mrs. Ralph Recto's husband, was surprised but elated by the announcement.

That, newly inducted Kampi member, overlooked Batangas Gov. Armand Sanchez, must now feel for himself—at least for now.

Having behind the Liberal Party ruling under Manila Mayor Lito Atienza to join Kampi, Sanchez now has to look for another party to embrace his reelection bid.

Kampi's move came on the heels of Mr. Aquino's order for her party mates to stop raiding the ranks of the ruling party.

Lakas executive director Raymond said the President had quietly ordered the order to Kampi officials to put an end to the infighting that has threatened to cause the administration coalition apart with the midterm elections less than two months away.

Both parties were at loggerheads over a number of positions and in some new administration slots after teamed to run for the same post.

Requests said the President was summing her "rightful role" as the head of the coalition by taking a more active hand in the reelection of the Lakas-Kampi ticket mates at the national level.

In a phone interview yesterday, Recto said he himself was surprised by Villabona's announcement in Naga City.

## Better candidate

In front of all local the leaders of Cabanatuan Sen. Villabona "was endorsing my wife, Vilma, as the official candidate of Kampi in his capacity as party president," he said.

The significance of Kampi's move was not lost on by senator.

"The two most significant partners [in the coalition] realized that Vilma was the better candidate, and because of Louie Villabona's statement, I don't know if Kampi will still have a candidate of same substance," Recto said.

He said that the open endorsement of Villabona had already save "ripples to Kampi party mates in Batangas."

"In fact, there are a lot of mayors of Kampi talking, to us. It appears that all the four congressmen are supporting Vilma, aside from the overwhelming support from the people," Recto said.

Of the 34 mayors in Batangas, those currently supporting Vilma's gubernatorial bid include all eight mayors from the first district, three from the second district, three from the third district and all seven from the fourth district.

The rest of the mayors, who are mostly Kampi members, were seen to join Vilma's camp, Recto said.


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# Casiño files perjury, libel raps vs militants' widows

By Alison V. Lopez

DAHILAN SA DIUMANO CASIÑO of Bayan Muna slapped perjury and libel charges against four widows of slain militants in Sta. Mesa Chief Prosecutor's Office yesterday.

Casiño lodged the complaint against Isabelita Reyadang, Adelaida Felipe, Clorebilla Aguilar-Perez and Julie Flores Rondina, all Bonggabon, Nueva Ecija, who filed on March 16 a disqualification case against Bayan Muna with the Commission on Elections. They charged Casiño with harassing them and threatening to kill their husbands for supporting the rival Akbayan party-list group between 1998 and 2001.

## Disenfranchise

Felipe also accused Casiño, deceased Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza and Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano of ordering her husband's execution.

The hearing of the Casiño case will be held today. Casiño will be filing his party-list candidacy for a congressional seat tomorrow.

In a statement, Casiño said Bayan Muna would not take lightly the "defamation of our good name for which I.2B of our members have offered their lives in supreme sacrifice. Those who commit libel and perjury in their attempt to discredit and disenfranchise Bayan Muna must face criminal proceedings."

In his affidavit, Casiño contended that Bayan Muna was not yet in existence in 1998, adding that Casiños records would show the party-list group was registered in February 2001. He also said Anakpawis and Gabriela had not yet been conceived in 2001, and that Bayan Muna did not have armed members.

"The statement is so general and it intended more to destroy the good name of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela for political reasons," he said.

The widows also alleged that Bayan Muna removed their Akbayan posters, thus preventing them from campaigning for their group. Felipe claimed to have seen the four representatives in a meeting of left-leaning groups in Bonggabon in 2003.

## 'Perjured affidavits'

Casiño said he had never been in Bonggabon, Nueva Ecija, and he did not know Danilo Felipe, much less refer his killing or the killing of any member of Akbayan."

Rejecting and Felipe, he said, recycled "perjured affidavits" of Aguilar-Perez and Rondina "to harass their own labor claims against Bayan Muna."

"These falsehoods are made by persons who hide and are afraid to show their faces because they are ashamed of their lies and are cowards who could not even frontally face the ones they accused," he said, referring to the two women who appeared before the Casiños swearing with.

Casiño said that aside from answering the alleged libel charges in the Casiños, the group decided to press criminal charges against the heir so they could still be held liable for their statements even if the Casiños case is dismissed.

"Let this be a warning to those who allow themselves to be used by the government and the military," Casiño said.

A civil case was also filed in the Quezon City Regional Trial Court.

A plus METRO

# Scramble for COCs starts for Metro bets

## Mayoral hopefuls file papers days before March 29 deadline

By Allison W. Lopez, Julie M. Aurelio and Nancy C. Carvajal

MANILA/Mayor Lito Atienza's endorsee son, Ali (right), for mayor and his running mate, Dan Bagatsing. Father and son were dressed in their trademark Hawaiian shirts. INQ STORY

BISHOP Teodoro Bacani Jr. is flanked by his brother, Rep. Rudy Bacani (right), who also wants to be mayor of Manila, and Grigor "Butch" Belgica, his running mate. INQ PHOTOS

BEN JEWDOCHY Estrada is fully supportive of fellow Sen. Alfredo Lim, who is making another bid for Manila's top post. INQ PHOTOS

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## DID YOU KNOW

**THROUGHOut Manila** may be talked about as a community in 1120 Indian Pueblo Indians make but a statement the area. Because only many clients residing in the Philippines, 6 acres reflected by it the 1 Mb million, or "Little Venice" at "Little Italy."

In 1910, American leaders built a big metal for oil barges on the Pasig riverbank. They bought lots adjacent to the river to store crude product warehouses. This paved the way for the establishment of social districts in the area.

**Ziel L. Benabaro**
Inquirer Research

# Dirtier by the dozen

THE SUPREME COURT IS reportedly investigating the actuations of the so-called "Fifth Estate" of the Court of Appeals, my sources told me.

The "Fifth Estate" are persons who demand bribes from litigants whose cases have been shunted to the appellate court.

Their temporary restraining orders (TROs) are allegedly also for sale.

An Air force band plays to passengers arriving at Clar Pueblo Princesa Airport.

No, they do not welcome OFs. The band plays to all arriving passengers of Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific, Air Philippines and Zestair.

**ON TARGET**
*Ramon DeVo*

The idea of a welcoming band came from Brig. Lee Lagrosa, chief of the Air Force's component of the Western Command.

But here's a woot woot: The airport's cargo conveyor belt ain't been fixed after it broke down several months ago.

This, despite the fact that each departing passenger pays P550 for airport use. Where does the money go?

Senior Supt. Dennis Reta, the new Palawan police director, is one cop who thinks differently from most other cops.

A day after the grenade blast in the province that killed eight persons and wounded scores of others, Reta told his subordinates: "I don't go to sleep with the thought that people are dying at the provincial hospital."

He was reacting to reports from subordinates that some of the wounded were in serious condition and could die.

And since I'm pursuing Reta in the column, he could get into trouble (built by association, you know).

The Crusade Against Malacañang Museum chapter has written the Supreme Court through Chief Justice Reynato Puno, requesting support for the plan to abolish the Court of Appeals branch in Cebu.

"We have received a lot of information about this 'justice for sale' corruption factor," said Thelma Cheong, the group's national vice president.

"It may not be a cause for wonder that Visayas magistrates, whose salary load from the Visayas, prefer to be appointed to the Court of Appeals-Cebu," Cheong added.

"Should the court come this year decide to abolish the Court of Appeals-Cebu for justice's sake, two facts are full support," she added.

The CeBeVisayas Chapter is just one among many groups that have complained against the alleged corruption in this particular court.

I've talked to a lot of lawyers in Cebu who confirm the Ombudsman's corruption there.

For talked to a lot of lawyers in Cebu who confirm the Ombudsman's corruption there.

"If nine (of) Visayas magistrates, whose salary load from the Visayas, prefer to be appointed to the Court of Appeals-Cebu," Cheong added.

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I've talked to a lot of lawyers in Cebu who confirm the Ombudsman's corruption there.

# Jeep strike vs 'mulcters'; Bernabe cries foul

By Julie M. Aurelio

A JEEPNEY DRIVERS' GROUP IN Batangas City yesterday went on strike to protest the city government's alleged inaction on their complaint about extortion (illegal) PU fees.

The protesters, members of the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators Alliance of Concerned Transport Organization, also complained that some of Mayor Florencio "Tan" Bernabe's operatives extorting money from them.

Elmo de Lima, PCDO-ACTO president, said around 3,000 members of his group joined the mass action, but the Batangas police chief, Supt. Ronald Revilla, contested the protesting drivers' number to 600.

Among the routes that were affected as early as 7 a.m. yesterday were Ilo ilo, cubo- Isetan avenue (formerly Sarai Road), Kaliwan, Pinag, Centro and the Old Mall of Isla.

To help transfer commuters, the city government fielded two 60-seater buses and several ex-dump trucks. Things, however, returned to normal in a couple hours after the drivers reached a compromise with the police.

"The drivers returned to work around noon but this is only temporary until the city government's representatives in the end of the bargain again," said De Lima. He added that the PUJO-ACTO would lodge another strike if the drivers' problems remain unresolved.

Last month, De Lima's group went on strike to complain about coloring PU fare operating in the area which, according to the drivers, had reduced their daily earnings.

"Nothing came out of our negotiations last time," De Lima complained.

But the head of the city's office of traffic enforcers has up to now, they have not given me money," Bernabe said.

He added that he has ordered the Traffic Management Group to go after colorum PU units operating in the area.

**STRANDED** passengers get a free ride on a bus provided by the Batangas City government to prepare drivers went on strike yesterday. RONI ROMASILOS

Emilio, meanwhile, said he was unfair arrested five men who were caught extorting money from jeepney drivers. The suspects, however, were freed after no one came forward to file complaints against them.

The five were identified as Delon Lim, Ernesto Pineda, Felix Montefrio, all residents of Barangay City; Randall Lee of Dasay and Pevalen Lopez of Lagunsa.

Bernabe confirmed the PCDO-ACTO for breaking an agreement that it would not hold a transport strike without first notifying the city government.

# Actor Regala nabbed in drug raid

By Tina G. Santos

THREE PERSONS, INCLUDING ACTOR John Regala, were arrested by operatives of the Manila Police District during a raid for safety officer in a Malate, Manila.

Apart from Regala, 35, also named by members of the District Anti-Illegal Drugs-Special Operations Task Group were Antonio Flores Jr., 42, and Roberto Agana, 48, both of 571 Security St., Malate.

Charges for violation of Republic Act 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002) were filed against the suspects in the Manila Prosecutor's Office.

A concerned citizen tipped off police about the frequent presence of the suspects in Regala's Malate house.

Although Agana was the only one caught carrying methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu, Regala was also booked in Regala and Flores for questioning. The two were later released, although police said they were not yet off the hook. Regala, who was reportedly asleep at the time of the raid, denied the charges.

# Scramble for COCs starts for Metro bets

As of page A1

Mayor Toby Tiangco and his vice mayor, Patrick Joseph Aveno, were the first to throw their hat into the political ring.

Both made a low-key appearance at the local Comelec office on Saturday morning, accompanied by just a few followers and City Hall employees.

In contrast, Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri and his running mate, Councilor Rhoda Carreon, held a motorcade just before submitting their COCs.

In Quezon City, 43-year-old lady boxer, who called himself a social organizer, is the only one who has filed his COC for the city's highest post.

Rosales submitted his certificate to the local Comelec on March 22.

With Kristine L. Alave and Marjorie E. Ortiz

## METRO BRIEFS

### Palao kin killed

A RELATIVE of the government's star witness against suspended drug lord Jimmy Bondoc was gunned down Sunday, the Pasay City police reported yesterday.

Ulysses Tenorio Bautista, 47, died on the spot after he was shot by two gunmen in front of Bautista Grocery, a sari-sari store on Bonifacio Street, Pasay City. Bautista was the husband of Bondoc's cousin Rebecca Palao.

The gunmen escaped after the shooting at around eight o'clock last night, Pasay police chief Senior Supt. Francisco Ephraim said. He said Bautista's relatives identified the suspects.

The gunmen were a former security guard of Palao, PO2 Ramil Abing and Officer Policeman Bautista, some about Bondoc's drug deals, having served as witnesses.

*Kristine L. Alave*

### Love angle?

THE POLICE National Headquarters in Camp Crame has formed a task force to investigate a shooting incident involving a Civil Service Commission official and a student at the Don Bosco Technical College in Mandaluyong City.

Task Force Crame, headed by Chief Superintendent Leopoldo Bataoil, will look into the possibility that the shooting incident was a crime of passion.

Bataoil said the task force was formed by the director general of the Philippine National Police, Oscar Calderon, to investigate the shooting incident.

*Jaime D.L. Laude*

# Wife of ousted Thaksin charged with tax evasion

BANGKOK, THAILAND—THE wife of ex-Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was charged Monday with evading millions of dollars in taxes, opening the first corruption case involving the ousted leader's inner circle since a September coup.

Pojaman Shinawatra, her brother and secretary were arraigned at the Bangkok Criminal Court and released after posting bail of 15 million baht (US$370,000), or six (US$1,000) bail, said her lawyer Supachai Panama.

The court set a trial date for May 14.

The case marks the first prosecution of those close to Thaksin, who was ousted by a September military coup and accused of widespread corruption. Coup leaders had cited Thaksin's corruption as justification for his ouster and have based strong criticism by facing close to prime their allegations, many of which remain under investigation.

Pojaman, who could face prison time if found guilty, made no comment to reporters as she was escorted by dozens of police from the courthouse and into a dark sedan. More than 1,000 police were deployed in the area amid concerns over possible protests by both supporters and opponents of Thaksin, police Capt. Somsak Wiriamorn said.

The family's lawyer said the tax charged to plead not guilty and defense preparations were under way.

"We are preparing the best tax lawyers to fight the case in court," Supachai told reporters.

The case centers on a 1997 transfer of shares in the family telecommunications empire later known as Shin Corp.

An investigation by the Assets Examination Committee found last month that Thaksin's wife and her brother had to pay back taxes of about 546 million baht—almost US$13 million (or, roughly 2 billion) at the current exchange rate—on the shares transfer. The committee was appointed by coup leaders to investigate alleged corruption linked to Thaksin's administration.

Pojaman and her brother, Bhinnapan Damapong, face a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison and a 400,000 baht (US$12,000; euro9,186) fine each if convicted on two tax evasion counts, said Amphol Yaicoowong, spokesperson for the Attorney General's Office.

The secretary, Kanchanapa Hongthero, would face a maximum penalty of seven years and a 200,000 baht (US$6,000; euro4,500) fine because she is accused of only one charge.

Thaksin transferred shares in Shin Corp. to his maid and other domestic helpers to shed holdings before taking public office. He first of two terms as prime minister began in 2001.

His case is not connected to the **enormous sale last year of Shin** Corp. to Temasek Holdings, a Singapore state-owned investment firm for 73.2 billion baht (US$1.7 billion; euro1.7 billion). But it is being widely watched as part of the corruption allegations against Thaksin.

The filing sake drew widespread protests because it placed diverse gir assets, including concessions, three satellites, in the hands of foreigners, and because the deal was concluded in this that Thaksin's family did not have to pay any capital gains tax.

Protests over the sale fueled calls for Thaksin to resign, causing political tensions that culminated in September's coup.

Thaksin's daughter Pintongta and son Pinontapee are under investigation by the Assets Examination Committee in connection with that transaction.

Thaksin was in New York when the coup occurred and has not returned to Thailand since. Pojaman has kept Bangkok as her primary residence, periodically joining her husband on trips he has made to other Asian countries and at an apartment they own in London. AP

POJAMAN Shinawatra

## Republicans express doubt over Gonzales

WASHINGTON—THREE REPUBlican senators voiced fresh concerns on Sunday about Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales' handling of the dismissal of eight US lawyers that Democrats say were politically motivated.

The comments, in separate televised interviews with Republicans with histories of breaking with the White House, provided further indication of growing concern that Gonzales, whom he needs most, among fellow Republicans.

Questions over Gonzales' future intensified as both sides of the aisle this weekend after the release of justice department documents late Friday that revealed plans for a meeting in which Gonzales and his aides discussed the dismissals last year, 18 days before they happened. Gonzales had previously said he was "not involved in any discussions about what was going on."

Speaking on "Meet the Press" on NBC, Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., said he spoke with Gonzales on Saturday and told him "he was going to have no explanation as to why he said he wasn't involved in discussions about the law's enforcement, and now you have these e-mails which appear to contradict that."

While House officials continued to defend Gonzales, saying the e-mail messages did not directly contradict anything he had said and noting that he had not departed that at the end of the process he signed off on the final list of prosecutors to be dismissed. AFP

WOMEN OF BURMA
Young Burmese women lay down fresh grass while repairing the road to Mandalay March 25 near Bago, Burma, also known as Myanmar.

## Study says kids in day care develop behavior problems

A WIDELY ANTICIPATED REPORT FROM THE largest and longest-running study of American child care has found that keeping a preschooler in a day care center for a year or more increased the likelihood that the child would become disruptive in class—and that the effect persisted through the sixth grade.

The effect was slight, and well within the normal range for healthy children, researchers found. And as expected, parents' guidance and their genes had by far the strongest influence on how children behaved.

But the finding held up regardless of the child's race or family income, and regardless of the quality of the day care centers.

On this point researchers were also found that **time spent in high-quality day care** centers was correlated with higher vocabulary scores through elementary school.

The research, being reported Monday in part of the federally financed Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, tracked more than 1,300 children in various arrangements, including staying home with a parent, being cared for by a nanny or a relative, or attending a large day care center. Once the subjects reached school, the study used teacher ratings of each child to assess behavior like interrupting class, teasing and bullying. The findings are certain to fuel a long, raining debate over day care, experts say.

The debate reached a high pitch in the late 1980s, during the so-called day care wars, when the Reagan administration questioned whether it was better for mothers to work or stay home. Day care workers and their allies, mostly working parents, argued that it was the quality of the care that mattered, not the setting. But the new report affirms similar results from several smaller studies in the past decade suggesting that setting does matter.

Other experts were quick to question the results. The researchers could not randomly assign children to one kind of care or another; parents chose the kind of care that suited them. That means there was no control group, so determining cause and effect was not possible. And some said that measures of day care quality left out important things. NYT

## 5 US soldiers killed in Iraq blasts

BAGHDAD—BOMB ATTACKS KILLED FIVE US soldiers in Iraq, the US military said on Monday amid reports that the outgoing US ambassador would take last year with Iranian rebel groups in a bid to curb the country's ongoing lawlessness.

Four of the Americans were killed in a roadside bombing on Sunday against their patrol in the troubled province of Diyala, where the chief US commander has said his troops are battling al-Qaida, Sunni, Shiite and even Iranian insurgents.

Two troops were also wounded in the attack, while another soldier died in northwestern Baghdad on the same day in another roadside bombing—the biggest single killing of US forces fighting in Iraq.

The latest casualties brought the military's losses to 7,224 since 130 led foreign troops launched Iraq in March 2000 to oust president Saddam Hussein, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

In Iraq's third city of Mosul, gunmen on Sunday killed Sunni tribal leader Muhammad Jassim al-Ganal, a member of the Al-Obaida clan that is a significant Arab tribe in northern Iraq, a police official Mohammed Ahmed.

Ganal's son and nephew were also wounded after the insurgents sprayed his vehicle with gunshots in central Mosul last Sunday, the policeman added. AFP

## Low-birth Singapore woos immigrants

SINGAPORE—MILLIONAIRE ENTREPRENEUR Robert L Chandran is just the kind of man Singapore wants.

The Indian-born entrepreneur hired his insurance company Chemcell Energy Ltd. in Singapore in 2000, created about 60 jobs in the city-state, and snapped his American passport for a Singaporean one.

Singapore's government is so worried about the low birth rate and greying population that it is reaching to immigrants like Chandran to add another two million people to the island of 4.5 million over the next 40 to 50 years.

For "later" Singaporeans such as Chandran, who can afford yachts and choose where they live, the city-state has a lot to offer: clean air, affordable housing, good schools, reliable phone and Internet connections, and an income tax rate of up to 20 percent that is one of the lowest in the region.

"Singapore has a great quality of life," Chandran, 57, told Reuters. "You to mention the taxes."

Many countries—such as Spain, Ireland and United Arab Emirates—rely on immigration to boost a shrinking labor force. But Singapore's immigration plan is unique because it would boost the population by nearly 50 percent, to the point where three-fourth in Singapore would hardly from a majority in their own country.

Such a huge influx of people is worrying many Singaporeans, who fear that they will lose their jobs to cheaper foreigners.

They also worry about over-crowding and strained race relations.

Most of Singapore's 3.6 million citizens are descended from descendants of earlier waves of immigrants who fled civil war in China or followed the British in colonial times.

Ethnic Chinese make up 75 percent of the population, ethnic Malays 14 percent, Indians 9 percent and others 2 percent.

But the island already has nearly one million foreigners, mostly low-skilled maids and construction workers from countries such as the Philippines, India and Thailand.

There are also some 138,000 professional expatriates, according to the Manpower Ministry, from Europe, North America, Australia, China and India—and those are the ones that some Singaporeans see as a threat to local jobs.

Those hoping to become Singapore residents or citizens are judged on their qualifications, work experience and income, according to a checklist provided by the immigration authorities.

Given the kind of affluent foreigners the government wants to woo, Singaporeans worry they will become "second-class citizens" in their own country at a time when many poorer Singaporeans already feel left behind because of a widening income gap.

Singapore ensures racial and social harmony...anyone caught "promoting" racial hostility or disrupting public order can be jailed—but some fear that immigration may cause problems.

One Singaporean Indian "don't mix with the local Indians and they stay apart, and in some cases, consider themselves superior to the local Indians," said Inderjeet Kaur, a member of parliament, the Straits Times newspaper reported this month. Reuters

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| Name and address of Company/Employer | Name of Foreign National | Position |
|---|---|---|
| [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] |

RODOLFO B. TRABUCO, JR.
Regional Director

The WORLD

Lira Lorenz B. Suzo

# Iran to limit cooperation with IAEA

TEHRAN—IRAN SAID ON SUNDAY IT WOULD limit cooperation with the UN's nuclear watchdog and vowed not to halt its atomic program "even for one second" following new financial and arms sanctions.

The UN Security Council unanimously approved the sanctions on Saturday for Tehran's refusal to suspend its program, but major powers also offered new talks and removed economic and technological incentive packages offer.

An Iranian government spokesperson said Iran would limit its cooperation with the UN watchdog, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, in retaliation.

"Iran will not stop its peaceful and legal nuclear trend even by one second because of such an illegal resolution," Iranian Vice-President Mohamad Ahmadinejad said on his website www.president.ir.

"The Iranian nation will not forget those who backed and those who rejected (the resolution), while adjusting to international relations," he said without indicating what that adjustment in ties would entail.

The adoption of the UN resolution will affect Iran's cooperation with the so-called "subsidiary arrangements" with the IAEA, spokesperson Gholamhossein Elham said on state television.

A senior Iranian nuclear official told Reuters these arrangements, accepted by Iran in 2003, meant Iran would declare any plans it had to build new atomic related facilities.

By suspending its cooperation with the agreement, it would be time the IAEA only six months before introducing nuclear material into any new facility and the official, who asked not to be identified.

The UN resolution goes beyond the nuclear sphere by banning Iranian exports of sensitive nuclear arms and freezing Iranian bank assets abroad of 28 individuals and entities, including state-owned Bank Sepah and the commanders of the Revolutionary Guards. Some of those affected are said to be involved in supporting militant movements abroad.

The UN sanctions will stay in place until Iran halts the enrichment of uranium and the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel, which can be used to make a bomb or to generate power.

Iran has 60 days to comply or face possible new sanctions.

Iran has already been previously told to suspend its nuclear program amid fear Tehran builds uranium enrichment.

The new measures are a follow-up to a resolution adopted on Dec. 23 banning trade in sensitive nuclear materials and ballistic missiles, as well as also freezing assets of individuals and institutions associated with atomic programs. Reuters


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# Blair: Iran's capture of UK sailors a serious issue

LONDON—BRITISH PRIME MINISTER TONY Blair warned Iran the fate of 15 British sailors and marines seized off the Iraqi coast was a "fundamental" issue for his government, as Iran suggested the group may be put on trial for violating its waters.

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett spoke by telephone Sunday with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and reiterated her country's stance that the British sailors and marines were operating in Iraqi waters as they searched for smugglers at sea.

She asked that British diplomats be allowed to meet with the service members and demanded their safe return, the Foreign Office said. In Jerusalem, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also called for their release.

At a European summit in Berlin on Sunday, Blair said Iran's claim that the sailors had entered into Iranian territorial waters "is simply not true."

"I want to get (the situation) resolved in as easy and diplomatic way as possible," Blair said, but added he hoped the Iranians "understood how fundamental an issue this is for the British government."

On a visit to the Middle East, Blair said the sailors and marines should be released immediately and said "we all fully trust the British" that they were not in Iranian waters when they were seized Friday.

But the Iranians also stuck by their view that the British had violated Iranian territory.

In New York, Mottaki said his government was considering charges against the British sailors and marines.

"The Iranian authorities intercepted three sailors and marines in Iranian waters and detained them in Iranian waters. This has happened in the past, as well," Mottaki said in broken English at a conference.

"The charge against them is illegal entrance into Iranian waters," Mottaki said. "In terms of legal issues, it's under investigation."

Mottaki declined to provide the exact coordinates of where the Britons were seized, saying that "very detailed information has been submitted to the representatives of the United Kingdom."

A spokesperson for Britain's defense ministry said they were not releasing the coordinates. AP

# Japan PM Abe apologizes for comfort women

TOKYO—JAPANESE Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, under fire abroad for denying government involvement in forcing women to serve as wartime sex slaves, said on Monday that he was "apologizing here and now as the prime minister."

He said earlier this month there was no proof Japan's government or army kidnapped women to work as "comfort women," as the wartime sex slaves are known in Japan.

Abe has also said he stood by a 1993 apology known as the "Kono Statement" that acknowledged official involvement in the brothels, but he has said there would be no new apology even if US lawmakers adopted a resolution seeking one.

"I am apologizing here and now as the prime minister, and it is an extract in the Kono Statement," Abe told a parliamentary committee in response to a question by an opposition lawmaker.

The prime minister's earlier comments denying official involvement in kidnapping women, mostly Asian, to work in the wartime brothels have angered South and United Nations (UN) with Washington, where US Congressman Michael Honda has introduced a resolution calling for Japan to make an unambiguous apology for the suffering of the sex slaves. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Sharapova exacts revenge; Roddick, Nadal advance /A23

SPORTS

Editor Teddvic S. Melendres

■ Kobe misses 50 points in Lakers win /A23

# Pagulayan eludes axe

## Kiamco, Orcollo, Gabica lead march of favorites

WARREN Kiamco (left) controls the tag with Ronnie David before the start of their match.


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# Roach may be in Manny's corner

ROACH: Keen on guiding Pacquiao

CELEBRATED TRAINER FREDDIE ROACH HAS INDICATED THERE is a big chance he may be able to fly in San Antonio, Texas, to be in the corner of superstar Manny Pacquiao when he clashes with undefeated Mexican tough Chris Algieri on April 14 at the Alamodome.

According to Pacquiao trainer Jesse Corsey, in a message posted at the Pacquiao website fb.friend, Roach said there is a "very good chance" that he will be able to attend to Pacquiao and that he and Corsey should discuss the possibility with Team De La Hoya today.

### De La Hoya permission

Roach believes that De La Hoya will give him the green light to be in Pacquiao's corner, said Corsey, as the trainer plans to give the undefeated fighter (other Golden Boy a day off from camp on April 14 as he could fly to Texas.

Roach and De La Hoya are in the thick of their preparation for the May 9 super fight with the undefeated Floyd Mayweather Jr. at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino, a card which will be shown live by ABS-CBN in the Philippines.

Pacquiao, meanwhile, is getting up at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Los Angeles for his April 14 bout with the undefeated Algieri, who is holed up in the mountains of northern Mexico.

### Special mouthguard

Yesterday, Pacquiao was fitted with a new custom-made Morsani yellow mouthguard (suspected to made the him) by renowned orthodontist Jeff de la Vega of Cosmopolitan Orthodontics.

The Filipino lefty has already racked up some 60 rounds of sparring both in Los Angeles City and in Los Angeles. He plans to be in Texas two weeks before his fight on April 14 to attend the final press conference as well as the official weigh-in for the bout.

Solar Sports, in partnership with GMA-7, will air the Pacquiao-Algieri fight in the Philippines. —Ludwin L. Lagumbay, Contributor

# PBA names perpetual trophy after Bernardino

MEMORIES OF A BASKETBALL MAN: Photos of the PBA's longest-serving commissioner, the late Jaime Bernardino, on a citizen table at the St. Alphonsus de Liguori Church at Magallanes Village, Makati City

MAYNE TORETO TO THE LATE EMILIO BERNARDINO Jr., the PBA has decided to name the Perpetual Trophy given to the champion of the Philippine Cup after the longest-serving commissioner popularly known as Jun B.

Commissioner Bob Itak said Bernardino's complete dedication to his job should be honored by naming the trophy after him.

While deeply saddened by his untimely demise, it is the PBA's wish to name the Perpetual Trophy after the late Jun Bernardino, whose professionalism, dedication and vision is the capacity as commissioner for nine long years propelled the league to greater heights," said Itak of the well-respected gentleman.

The golden Perpetual Trophy, which costs P100,000, was unveiled by awards executive Willie Banzon Dilkie. The award is given to a team that wins the All-Filipino conference three times in a row.

Barangay Ginebra received a replica of the trophy, which is the current Philippine Cup.

Bernardino died of heart attack early in dawn of Saturday in Iloilo 69.

He was the player for the two of high school and the University of the Philippines in college before making the PBA an eleventh round of fulfill.

After a brief career with Vintage Sports where he became famous for the "Man-to-the Ball" segment of the TV coverage, he joined the PBA where he rose from secretary to executive director to deputy commissioner and finally to commissioner, the fifth man to head Asia's first pro league.

He was the season's his 7 sports league from 1991-2002. I note that now the PBA achieve all-time records in both attendance and gate receipts that still stand today.

Bernardino stepped down after the 2006 season, a year after suffering his first heart attack.

The PBA will hold a special tribute for Bernardino when the league celebrates its 41st year on April 8.

In honoring Bernardino, the PBA will include the chairs table (nominees for best supporter), such as the Ramayon Honor Foundation of Fr. Joey Faller, to the list of foundations the league has been helping through the years.

PBA players have been bargain-starving Manila practitioners their entire tenure and will do so for the duration of the Talk 'N Text Fiesta Conference.

## NBC CAGING

# Pacman-GS gets back at Quezon five

DAVAO CITY—Jeff Dawson Gerasta got back at opening-day nemesis Quezon Villa Arellis, 89-70, Saturday for an 11-0 run to the 2007 NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the Almendras gym here.

The Warriors of hosting here Manny Pacquiao rode on the deadly inside game of Jeffrey Leonis and Bel-

| STANDINGS | W | L |
|---|---|---|
| Tagaytay | 3 | 0 |
| DAVAO | 1 | 0 |
| Iloilo | 1 | 0 |
| Pagadian | 2 | 1 |
| Bacolod | 2 | 1 |
| Quezon | 1 | 1 |
| Iloilo | 0 | 1 |
| Cotabato | 1 | 1 |
| Digos | 0 | 1 |

(Elimination Game)
10 men—signal as section

by Marcus Cruzmingo (final 64-77) loss to Quezon.

Leonis and Almeras combined for 27 points and 15 rebounds as Gerasta advanced into the top of the bracket.

Gov. Wilfredo Sarangani, Quezon aspire set fired their fourth defeat in five games, including three to their Mindanao rival [illegible].

"We played great basketball out there," said Gerasta coach Ramon Bello.

Pacman's hoop guy for their second straight win in four games when they were the defending Digos Crusaders or 12 more for the series.

The scores:

DAVAO (89)—Leonis 26, Ver Jones 17, Sarandon 11, Mirabel 9, Ramos 8, Fernandez, Torres 5 (30-7, Dawson)

QUEZON (70)—Lanot 15, Ver 12, Almeras 12, De Leon, Ron Miller 8, Mallari 6, Agulto 4, Gonzales 2, Ni 2 (63-3, Dela Cruz)

Quarters: 25-16, 47-31, 69-52, 89-70

## Amateur slugfest on Fistarama

FOR FULL RESULTS OF FISTARAMA PROGRAM, SEE SPORTS

# Rock 'gives SLR little impact'

By Jam Navarro

AFTER ANSWERING ITS WORST loss in shutout history, the Letran Knights ability is taking a second look at reigning Rock Winston.

The Knights, the problem with Rock as far as talent is concerned," said coach Aaron Fernandez. "But he's quite small compared to the other imports and he's having a tough time competing against them."

Rock is the only import who, at just a shade over 6 feet 5 inches, is the shortest among the current crop of imports in the reigning PBA 75 Total PBA Fiesta Cup.

Though adequate with his leaping skills, Winston is certainly challenged. Powerhouse Letran's reigning Best Import Marqueis Chandler is 6-3 3/4 while Red Bull's Jabbar Hamm is 6-5 1/4.

WINSTON

As a result, the Rockets have dropped three of their four games. Their lone defeat was a harrowing 114-79 hearing from defending champion Red Bull.

The possibility of replacing Winston, however, depends on the availability of the American player the Rockets are trying to get.

"We're still playing in the UE," said Fernandez, who declined to name their prospect. "But we'll try hoped him."

We'll get him [Winston], reasons given, then we'll evaluate whether to replace him or not," he added.

# RP five leaves early to catch NBA game

THE PHILIPPINES MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM departs Thursday for a two-week camp in Cancun City and to be able to secure visitors for the Letran-Jose NBA game on April 8 at Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Fil-Am Jayson Castro, who the players are trying very hard to get Jordan's entry through the Internet," said assistant coach Chot Reyes, who already has two tickets courtesy of Tim Winters, assistant to Letran coach Phil Jackson and active of the triangle offense from their Chicago Bulls days.

To coach Steve Nash and the Phoenix Suns to after the national team is actively looking forward to the game. "It's not so much Kobe Bryant and the Lakers, because it's the latest game that we were to capture now."

## SPORTSWATCH

### Tiu looking to break 10-second barrier

THE COUNTRY'S FASTEST DRIVER HIS RACE'S LANE HERE already try to open the 10-second barrier this weekend at the Philippine Drag Racing Championship resumes with its second leg this Saturday at the Batangas Raceway Circuit (Drag) Mirpa Homes, Batangas. Jonathan Yusi Tiuso Tiu goes for his seventh straight victory this summer Quick Eliminator after taking the season opener with an explosive record-breaking blasted 10.003 seconds. Quick Eliminator "I think I can do it," said Tiu, who has been consistently and repeatedly break the nine-second barrier," he said. Driver Isaac Mabi Tiu of Mitsubishi Evo VI teams as his biggest foe in the class dominated by the Automobile Association of Philippines (AAP). Tiu actually broke Tiu's previous record of 10.062 three starting position. Before Tiu dominated Summer Allen starting her bash to back-to-back wins Romero Chiongson Jr. Summer Cup and PR 19 winner Roman Manuel Jr. in the Pro Street division.

### Riviera picked as Asia's best golf course

THE RIVIERA GOLF CLUB IN MANILA, ONE OF ASIA'S best-known historical golf courses for 2008 by the Asian Golf Monthly. The prestigious honor was achieved after thousands of votes for the 2008 poll from all over Asia made the Riviera Golf Club the winner. Steve Hinds, Director of the Philippine Open, Asia's oldest professional golf tournament, the Riviera Golf Club will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Riviera Manager in Singapore. "This is really a big moment for us," said national general Golden G. Castro, the president of Riviera. "We are deeply honored, this is a proof since many of the Riviera's ability to compete and will against the best in the world." Mike Goldsmith, the AGM publisher said PGW for international sales and marketing. Golden Golf Club in Singapore, Malaysia's Royal Selangor Golf Club and Royal of the Asia Pacific Golf Development Summit 2007 on Nov. 11 in Singapore.

### Heritage Cup derby at Araneta today

THE FLAMBOYANT PHASE OF THE FIRST HERITAGE CUP IN COCKBALL ring Derby, a super cockfest with 64 entries up for grabs, kicks off at the Araneta Coliseum today with some 30 fights lined up. The Heritage Cup, which will go to the champion, has enough sentimental value, integrity and excitement to spotlight big, according to Rene "Boy" Chua, president of the organizing United Cockpeasants Inc. (UCI). Chua said the Heritage Cup Championship Derby is the breeders' stake today and the members of Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, Bro Mario, Bobby Dyquiangco, Nonoy Tan, Gerry Corpuz, Ramon Ang, Gandeza group, Arman Santos, Abel Soto, Jun Sevilla, Joseph Chua and Ace Tang, among others. The semifinals of each Heritage Cup 4 and the Thursday's second semifinals.



BY TOP CHOICE

# Bayron makes it to match play

JAY BAYRON IS NO. 5 OF 32 IN THE chasing holes to end a 71, then zipped two others in sudden death to claim one of the last two spots in the month-day phase of the 2007 Southeast Asian Golf Championship at the Mimosa Golf and Country Club in Los Antonio, Sydney Monday.

Going up for last after dropping to 43rd in the final round of the 72-hole stroke play tournament Saturday, Bayron stepped to the final round to finish with a 208.

He was actually tied with three others for the last two berths of the 32-player match play cast but Bayron beat Jeff Hulbert of Australia, Wales and Britain three holes on the third playoff hole to join Jay Leigh Gregan of Geneva into the tournament proper.

The 27-year-old Bayron, sportsmail of the ICTSI-backed national pool, took the 31st slot and drew the No. 2 finish, Scott Arnold of WPIC in the match play series beginning Tuesday.

Arnold had lost to eventual stroke play leaderboard Andrew Dodt of Australia in the second hole during playoff duel after both finished at 276.

Bayron is one of only two Asians who advanced, the other being Singaporean Chew Tze Huang, who ventured up to joint 20th after a 71.



BAYRON: Versus No. 2

# Kobe misses 50 in LA win

KOBE BRYANT: 43 Points

LOS ANGELES—KOBE BRYANT refused out on a fifth consecutive 50-point game but still managed to register 43 points in the Los Angeles Lakers' 115-113 home victory over the Golden State Warriors on Sunday.

The win was the fifth straight for the Lakers, who used a 14-0 run in the fourth quarter to overturn a 98-90 deficit.

Bryant hit 15 of 32 shots and made 9 of 11 free throws, but the Lakers were indebted to getting him the ball for much of the second and third quarters.

Lamar Odom added 24 points and 10 rebounds for the home side while Monta Ellis led the Warriors with 28.

A subpar second quarter, to which Bryant scored only four points, cost the shooting guard a chance to join Wilt Chamberlain as the only NBA players to score 50 or more points in five straight games.

Bryant started strongly collecting 17 points against the Warriors in the first quarter, seven of them in a 41-second burst.

But he took only four shots in the second quarter, hitting two of them, to end the first half with 23 points.

A 13-point third quarter left Bryant needing 19 points in the final period to keep the streak alive. He got 13.

Bryant had become only the second player in NBA history to score 50 or more points in four consecutive games when he hit an even 50 against the New Orleans Hornets on Friday.

Only Chamberlain has had a better streak. He scored 50 or more points in seven consecutive games with Philadelphia in 1961 and reached the mark in five consecutive games with San Francisco the next season.

Bryant began his high-scoring streak with 62 points against Portland on March 16. He added 50 more against Minnesota on March 19 and scored 60 against Memphis on Thursday.

Jason Terry scored 26 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter as the Dallas Mavericks won their sixth straight game, a 104-97 road victory over the Atlanta Hawks. Dirk Nowitzki and Josh Howard both had 20 points for the Mavericks.

Chris Bosh had 28 points and David Wesr 22 as the New Orleans Hornets snapped the Cleveland Cavaliers' five-game winning streak with a 100-96 victory.

The Denver Nuggets scored the game's final eight points to beat the Cavaliers 105-93 in Cleveland. Carmelo Anthony had four points in the run and finished with 27 overall.

Mike Bibby hit a franchise-record nine three-pointers in scoring 37 points and the Sacramento Kings surprised the visiting Phoenix Suns 137-106.

Jim Jackson drained out a 14-point performance with a fade-away jumper with two seconds remaining in the Chicago Bulls' 92-90 road win on Indiana. Boston

# Florida, Georgetown barge into Final Four

ST. LOUIS—JOAKIM NOAH had 14 points and 14 rebounds and led the defending champion University of Florida back to US college basketball's Final Four, beating Oregon, 85-71, Sunday at the semifinal field was completed.

Lee Humphrey made seven 3-pointers and Taurean Green added 21 points to lead the Gators to their 14th straight postseason victory, a stretch that includes last year's national championship and two Southeastern Conference titles.

Florida next faces UCLA in Atlanta in a rematch of last year's championship game. Georgetown plays Ohio State in the other semifinal.

Florida beat UCLA last year in a rout, 73-57, for its first national championship.

In San Antonio, New Jersey Georgetown overcame an 11-point deficit in the second half. Jesse scored 14 straight points to overcome to stun the top-seeded Tar Heels for its first trip to the Final Four since 1985.

The Hoyas were helped by an amazing collapse from Carolina (21-7), which made only one of 22 field goal attempts, including its first 13 in overtime, over a 11 minute span.

The Tar Heels actually had a chance to win in regulation, but freshman Wayne Ellington missed an open jumper from the swing in the final second.

Jeff Green led Georgetown with 23 points and freshman Jonas Summers added 20.

Tyler Hansbrough had 26 points and 11 rebounds for the Tar Heels. AP

BEST SEAG PERFORMER: US-based Filipino Jamie Pangilinan en route to a 1:51.67 clocking in the evening heat of the 400-meter breaststroke in the 15th FINA World Championships at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne, Australia. The 20-year-old Pangilinan of Harvard University landed 23rd overall to emerge best Swimmer among Southeast Asian Games bets. SEA Games triple-gold medalist Miguel Molina timed 1:52.67 in the 200-meter freestyle finals, also the best among regional entries.

# PCU ban remote—Atayde

By Marc Anthony Reyes

RE: DON'T PANIC PHILIPPINE Christian University suspended.

This was the sentiment of St. Benilde's Benny Atayde, chief of the NCAA investigative bodies probing rate alleged irregularities committed by the Dolphins during the past season.

But Atayde said the decision on what penalty to impose against PCU—if proven guilty—would depend on the NCAA management committee and policy board.

However, however, said Atayde since a further hear the mind of the NCAA board considering the strength of the PCU athletes and the fact that the rival UAAP will be opening to a complete field with the withdrawal of suspended La Salle.

PCU is the perennial champion in the seniors division and runner-up to the high school champion Santa Dolphins, who have five players under questioned, finished second to San Sebastian but seniors.

"We will give PCU due process," said Atayde, adding that PCU will be asked to present the findings of its own investigation before the league will come up with its own conclusions.

# Dacanay, Mapilisan UAAP's top athletes

By Jeannine W. Pape

A 4-GOLD-SILVER, 1-BRONZE, 1-RACE HAUL SEALED IT for swimming ace Lolita Lourdes Dacanay.

Dacanay was named the Outstanding Athlete of the Philippines, Dacanay edged 25 other top varsity standouts to capture the 60th UAAP Athlete of the Year plum for the second straight season.

"The really surprised," said Dacanay after the UAAP Annual Awards exclusive night at the University of the East Theater. "I have two more years in the Juniors and I plan to keep on winning."

Dacanay, outstanding Most Valuable Player this season, ruled the 50-meter and 100m butterfly 200m, 100m and 200m backstroke, and the 200m and 400m individual medleys.

The seven-finally-UP and Child Development student also received a mention for winning two golds in the 50m and 100m backstroke during the Ateneo University Games.

In the junior division, taekwondo jin Nicole Magdilaos of University of Santo Tomas copped the Athlete of the Year award.

UP also bagged the Juniors and seniors overall championships after highlighting its campaign with seven title sweeps in men and women's basketball, lawn tennis and taekwondo.

"We would like to thank this award to our athletes who showed hard work and determination to give glory to the school," said UST board superintendent Fr. Hyacinth Gagan.

The juniors and senior MVPs (U-23 sports) were also recognized, along with the outstanding student-athletes and players who saw action in international competitions.

"The UAAP has continued to foster sports because after graduate hard work, integrity, discipline and team work," said UE president Jose Cuzon.

HUGA: Sharapova stretches to stuff against Serena Williams.

# Sharapova exacts revenge; Roddick, Nadal advance

MIAMI—MARIA SHARAPOVA rallied to avenge a Wimbledon defeat with a three-set victory over Serena Williams on Sunday, but she had to wait another day to see if she'll get a similar chance against Serena Williams.

Top-seeded Sharapova beat Serena Williams 2-6, 6-2, 7-5 to reach the fourth round of the $6.5-million WTA and ATP Masters Series tournament here.

Sharapova was next due to face fellow Australian Open champion Serena Williams or Czech Lucie Safarova.

But the scheduled night match between Serena and Safarova was postponed until Monday when rain struck again, leaving Sharapova to wait and see if she'll get a chance to avenge her Australian Open final rout.

Sharapova was primed in the fourth round by second-seeded Belgian Justine Henin, No. 5 Svetlana Kuznetsova and No. 4 Elen Clijsters of Belgium, while fifth-seeded Lucie Martina Hingis ruined in the third round for the second straight year.

Henin rallied to beat Virginia Ruzzano of France 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (7/5).

Kuznetsova, the defending champion, advanced with a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Arbina Rodionova, while Clijsters booked a fourth-round date with China's Li Na by beating Samantha Stosur 6-4, 6-2. 11 ranked Shvedova's Kazakina Svitlovich, 6-0, 6-1, while Hingis fell to Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

In men's action, second-seeded Rafael Nadal of Spain and No. 3 Andy Roddick of the United States advanced to the fourth round. Nadal was handed a walkover after Belgium's Olivier Rochus withdrew with a foot injury and Roddick defeated Gilles Simon of France, 6-4, 6-4. AFP

# Ochoa hangs on to clinch Safeway title

SUPERSTEIN

OCHOA

Mesa, Arizona—Mexico's Lorena Ochoa squeezed a big lead for her second win in claim her first victory of 2007 at the $1.5-million Safeway tournament on Sunday.

The 2006 LPGA Player of the Year Ochoa overcame a six-stroke rally to claim the title.

After winning six tournaments last season, Ochoa claimed her 30th career title with a final round 68, beating Norwegian Suzann Pettersen by two strokes.

Ochoa had a four-day total of 18-under 270. Jennifer Rosales of the Philippines carded a 71 and tumbled to a tie for 42nd spot at 288.

Ochoa, 25, led by four strokes entering the final round but 68 was behind Pettersen when the Norwegian struck early with four birdies in a row from the second.

"You know what, I had no idea what position I was in," Pettersen said. "That was one of my goals today. I said to the people around me, 'I'm not going to watch the leaderboard today.' So, the first time I actually saw the leaderboard was on the 18th green," Ochoa, however, knew just what was happening when Pettersen made her run.

"I was watching the leaderboard," Ochoa said. "Because at the start was amazing. She's a great player, and I want to say it's a great win and congratulations for her.

"She put a lot of pressure on me. I was feeling good. I was feeling fine with my game." Ochoa bounced back with four birdies in five holes from the 14th en route to the win. AFP

# Tiger settles for 2-stroke WGC victory

MIAMI – TIGER WOODS BECAME only the fourth man to win the same title event six times, winning the eight-million-dollar World Golf Championships Cit Championship here Sunday despite an inconsistent final round.

World number one Woods fired a one-over par 73 to finish 72 holes at Doral's famed Blue Monster on 19-under par 269, two strokes ahead of runner-up Ben Wetterich for his 33th triumph in 24 PGC starts.

"Conditions were not easy," Woods said. "I had to grind it out. I had a hard time reading greens and holing putts. I had a tough time out there."

In his final tune-up before the Masters, Woods made a double title defense, having won the US PGA event at Doral the past two years and taken this event last year in England when it was known as the American Express Championship.

Skipping British Open and PGA Championship events, which he has won his 36th career PGA victory, fifth on the all-time list behind Sam Snead's record 41 and only six shy of Arnold Palmer's fourth-place lifetime tour total.

Only US legend Snead has dominated a single tournament more than Woods has championship events, which he also won in 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2006.

Woods also became the first player to win the different events on the US PGA Tour at least three times in a row having also done so in Bay Hill, the Memorial, the World Golf Invitational and the Buick Invitational.

It was the second victory of the season for Woods, who won his third Buick Invitational in January at Torrey Pines. He joined Fiji's Vijay Singh as the only two-time winners on the US tour this year.

In addition, he bounced back from a 22nd-place finish at last week's Arnold Palmer Invitational.

It was Woods' 39th victory in 43 times leading after 54 holes.

WOODS: Simply superb.

AFP

SPORTS

# Fistiana fight card: Team effort for disabled boxers

THEY GO INTO THE GUNKY OF THEIR corner bedridden and broke, unable to feed the themselves or feed their families.

Their former handlers have abandoned them long ago, and some of these disabled gladiators subsist on meager earnings from menial jobs—if they can still hack it.

The sad plight of the disabled pro boxers is not lost on their old ally, the Philippine Sportsmen's Association (PSA), which is serving a popular fight card to come Sunday to help set up livelihood projects for them.

In cooperation with the City of Manila and the Games and Amusement Board (GAB), the PSA will hold the Fista Pelikula boxing festival on April 15 at the Ralph Inclusive Park in Manila's Baywalk.

In his last act as chair of the Manila Sports Council, Arnold "Ali" Atienza paved the venue for the benefit fight card and rounded with some of the country's major sports supporters to ensure the success of the project ushered in the PSA caravan in 1951.

"We take this opportunity to partner with the PSA for the laudable endeavor to support retired and disabled boxers," said Atienza, son of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

The elder Atienza, himself a substitute of boxing, is opening the event to the public.

"The Ralph Inclusive Park has hosted a couple of boxing events since its rehabilitation to become one of the major parks in Manila," said the mayor. "With the Fiesta Pelikula, we expect a record attendance when it is held there for the first time."

GAB Chair Eric Buhain also assured the availability of some of the country's leading boxers for the fund raiser.

"We have lined up some very interesting matches," said Buhain.

In Tanauan Cruz, GAB matchmaker and head of the ratings division, piloted changes on Alex Encinares against No. 3 Jake Verzosa for the IBF super bantam championship.

Two supporting bouts feature IBF No. 2 mosquito Ouwen Coello against No. 3 Antonio dela Cruz and IBF No. 4 super bantam Jun Tulapo versus Alferez Leo, also from the famed GAB stable in No. 4.

Inquirer Sports Staff

NESTEA BEACH VOLLEY

# Visayas qualifying on

By Jane Navarro

TWO FORMER MVP CHAMPION CESAMON and an ex-Defender in the province's bracket will be represented in the Visayas qualifying of the 2007 Nestea Beach Volley tournament which fires off today at the La Salle Green Hills sandcourt.

The schools from the region hope to seize three slots each in the men's and women's division in the national championships to be held on April 19-21 in the island of Boracay.

Back to seek another crack in the men's title are Foundation, which won in 2001, and San Jose Seminary, the winner in 2002 and 2006.

The former women's champion, Southwestern, is the winningest team in the event's 11 years of history, having won the title in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

Southwestern also made it to the finals last year only to absorb a stunning loss to St. Bridde.

The other competing teams from the Visayas are Holy Rosary Colleges, Southwestern U, University of Negros Occidental Recoletos, St. La Salle Bacolod, University of San Agustin, University of San Carlos, University of Southern Philippines Foundation and University of the Visayas.

The Luzon eliminations were held last week with Pat Earnest G, Philippine Christian U and St. Francis of Assisi sailing the show Boracay slots in men's play, and FEU, Lyceum and Adamson advancing in the women's side.

Failing to survive were defending men's national champion Adamson and 2006 women's winner St. Scholas.

Six teams from Mindanao, which will hold its eliminations later this week, will complete the Boracay field.

In forming the nine teams from each division will fight for the P150,000 winner's purse. The winning coaches will also receive a cash prize of P50,000 this time.

TRIATHLON IN DAVAO: Officers of the Triathlon Association of Davao (Triad), led by its president Maritess del Rosario, are inducted in office by Triathlon Association of the Philippines (Triap) president Tom Carrasco Jr. during the recent inaugural leg of the Speedo-National Age Group Triathlon Series in Davao City.

# BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Mariano

# DOTC hit for 'bias' in $240-M project

## Firm claims agency favoring Chinese group

By Dazon L. Lucas

A FOREIGN FIRM THAT HAS OFFERED TO BUILD A NATIONAL broadband network (NBN) for the government is questioning the Department of Transportation and Communications' (DOTC) alleged bias for a Chinese company that offered to build the same facility at a later date and at a more expensive price.

At stake is a contract to build an integrated landline, cellular and Internet network for the government worth anywhere from $160 million to $262 million, depending on which proposal would be chosen.

In a letter to Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza last month, Amsterdam Holdings Inc. (AHI) said that their own $98 proposal should be given due evaluation first instead of just going ahead with another NBN proposal by Chinese company ZTE chat memo later.

In December 2006, AHI filed an unsolicited proposal with the government through the DOTC to build a national broadband network under a Build-Own-Operate (BOO) scheme.

The AHI proposal has a project cost of $240 million to be financed privately.

Under the AHI proposal, all of the government's agencies can use half of their purposed network's capacity while the private sector components will use the other half to subsidize the rest of the government's telecommunications costs.

On the other hand, Chinese telecommunications supplier ZTE filed another unsolicited proposal with the DOTC last month to build a national broadband network under a $262-million government-to-government loan agreement.

Under the Chinese proposal, ZTE will build the network and transfer it to the DOTC for it to operate.

According to AHI, the Philippine government would have to take out a loan from the

DOTC, B2

IN THIS ISSUE

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# Aboitiz subsidiary sells ₱2B in bad loans to Deutche Bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE ABOITIZ GROUP'S UNION Bank of the Philippines has entered into a deal to sell P2 billion worth of bad loans to Deutsche Bank AG London.

The agreement, approved last March 20 by Union Bank's board of directors, was disclosed by the bank on the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday.

Union Bank, which recently acquired International Exchange Bank, is also raising ₱300 million in capital through the sale of new shares in the stock market.

## Also raising $100M through sale of stocks

The bank's merger with Iflbank will create the country's seventh biggest private universal bank with assets of about ₱170 billion and a combined network of 191 branches.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas requires banks to unload bad assets more aggressively to the coming months as the extended special purpose vehicle law will expire next year.

Stiffer accounting and capital adequacy requirements have likewise given banks like Unionbank more reason to clean up their books.

The new Supreme Court resolution that speeds up foreclosure proceedings is also seen allowing banks to sell bad assets at a faster pace.

In a move en banc resolution, the Supreme Court amended the procedures in extra-judicial or judicial foreclosures by making it more difficult for compromises or stay temporary restraining or court injunction to be bandied.

The Bankers' Association of the Philippines said these reforms in foreclosure proceedings would even have a more significant impact to strengthening the banking system's financial conditions than the fiscal incentives granted by the BPV law itself.

## Year of the Pig brings more pork

FREE RACES CORRELEC: (DBN RADIO) GEW

I was first calling at 3 a.m. when a man knocked on the door and said, "There are 6 men bearing up your mother in Jose Abe Ave you going to help?" "No", I said. "Six should be enough."

At school, my daughter wrote, "Noah built an Ark. He had a wife named Joan, who was known as Joan of Ark."

I rang the office of BSD to ask why the shares were limit up.

The operator asked who I was.

"My Bearbull of the big cock."

SIRS?

I HAVE SEE SOME STOCK EXCHANGE TERMS:

Momentum investing—buying high and selling low.

Value investing...buying low and selling lower.

P/E ratio ...the percentage of investors are using (their pants) as the market crashes.

Bearishness & Puns ...your life in a nutshell.

Bull market—a random movement causing an investor to mistake himself for a financial genius.

Bear markets...1. 6. to. 18-month period when the bold get no allowance, the wife gets my jewelry and the husband gets no sex.

Stock split...when your ex-wife and lawyer split all your assets between them.

Market correction—the day after you buy stocks.

Cash flow—the movement your money makes as it disappears down the toilet.

International investor—long-term investor now in the northeast.

* * *

WALL STREET said the whole of the Asian region rose to a 3-week high after the FED abandoned its bias toward higher interest rates. The shift indicates that officials may have concluded that the risk of a deeper recession in the housing market might make it harder to raise rates to bring down inflation more quickly. While the FED described inflation as "elevated," some traders interpreted the new language to signal a rate cut as soon as June. I think they are being over-optimistic.

A chief economist said, "They are going to

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Mathurin

have a lot more room to maneuver in case the housing situation spins out of control. The FED will be patient with inflation. They will not make any preemptive move until they get a better feel on the economy." As expected, the rates were unchanged at 5.25 percent.

Bernanke indicated that the housing market has not stabilized since they met in January. Home sales, especially new ones, remain sluggish, delinquencies in a 3 ½-year high last quarter, driven by late payments on the riskiest loans, and the highest number of foreclosures since March 2004. The spillover effects from development in the housing market on consumer spending might have been more pronounced than forecast. The FED stressed that they were not abandoning the fight against inflation saying that the "predominant policy concern" is that inflation might fail to moderate.

Capacity in factories rose to its highest since 2000, and unemployment fell to 4.8 percent, approaching a 5-year low. "The level of resource utilization has the potential to sustain inflation. "Meanwhile, the Commerce Department cut its estimate of 4th quarter growth from 3.5 percent to 2.2 percent, figure of consumer sharpened to investment and shipments of non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft slumped 2.7 percent.

Investors were euphoric about the FED's statement but I think they are wrong because there is another problem. Over the past 16 quarters, profits year-on-year have grown at double digits, namely 13.1% percent. However, in 2007, the energy sector is expected to fall 2 percent on lower oil prices. Consumer services & technology are forecast to decline from 17 percent to 13 percent. The consumer sector is expected to fall 4 percent and overall, the S&P 500 index is expected to produce earnings growth of only 7.1 percent, down from 9.3 percent in January and 10.4 percent last year.

Once earnings grow by single digits, existing Price/Earnings ratios will be judged to be too high and that means that stock prices will decline. With a possible housing slump and single-digit earnings, I see no case for optimism on Wall Street. I am not forecasting a crash but do not think the market is going to make much headway this year. It is flat so far this year.

In the home market, there are a number of IPOs and secondary offerings. The IPO of Pacific Online is so small that it will be impossible to get shares unless your broker loves you.

There are offerings from several companies and rights issue pending from GTC, DM and VUL. Everybody is raising money while the economy is awash with liquidity. Yields on bonds are so low that investors have diverted their funds to equities.

In London, our market is very sophisticated and are differentiate between primary offerings and secondary offerings. A primary offer is from the company to the public and all money goes to the company in order to expand or pay off debt. In other words, the company benefits. A secondary offer is when existing shareholders sell part of their shares to the public. This is not a crime and they are free to do so but the money goes to them and not to the company. In general, primary offers are received better than secondary offers.

I have been selling investors to buy AFLAG MINING on the chart breakout. It has been trying to break ₱10 to par value, for months but on Thursday it succeeded and closed at ₱11 so I started it to the newsletter as a BREAKOUT. On Friday, it closed at ₱11.50 and now it is ₱12.75. There are already monthly shipments of nickel and by November, there will also be copper shipments as well. The bank will be contacted tomorrow by the city and our Research Department is in the process of evaluating it. I buy on the charts first and look into the fundamentals later. Usually, there is a correlation.

Before attending the GT meeting I will send Bernadine a 03 check. I don't like your solicitors and I remember the pro-commerce threat. mr.bearbull@hotmail.com

## Basic Petroleum eyes Mindanao biofuels firm

By Abigail L. Ho

LISTED FIRM BASIC PETROLEUM Inc. is looking to eight on the renewable and alternative energy industry, initially with the acquisition of Zambo Norte Hydroenergy Corp. (ZNEC) for ₱120 million.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Basic Petroleum said its board approved last Friday the acquisition of ZNEC, developer, owner and operator of a proposed 1mgpd sugar cane and ethanol plant in Dumingag del Norte.

The company, a wholly owned subsidiary of PNOC-Exploration Inc., plans to develop a 9,000-hectare sugar cane farm and put up a fully integrated ethanol plant with a capacity of 300,000 liters a day.

Basic Petroleum vice president and corporate secretary Carlos Rosales said the P120 million would be payable partly in Basic Petroleum shares, priced at 44 centavos a share, and the balance in cash.

The shares would be taken from the unsubscribed and unissued portions of Basic Petroleum's capital stock, he said.

Of the P120 million, a little more than P30.6 million will be payable in cash, with 30 percent of the amount payable upon signing of the memorandum of understanding between the two companies and the balance payable under terms to be agreed upon and provided in the MOU.

The proceeds put would be covered by 248.32 million Basic Petroleum shares worth almost P109.2 million.

It added that the MOU between the two parties was still being finalized.

Basic Petroleum would be conducted by Basic Petroleum-appointed third-party consultants to cover the technical, legal and financial aspects of the transaction, he added.

The acquisition would be subject to the approval of Basic Petroleum's stockholders, as well as to concerned regulatory agencies.

## Stocks close lower

From page B1

while waiting for a fresh positive lead, dealers said.

The composite index finished 18.04 points lower at 3,150.84 after trading between 3,168.35 and 3,141.40.

The broader all share index fell 8.61 points or 0.42 percent to 2,029.45.

Gains and declines were even at 21 each, with 40 stocks unchanged. Turnover was 6.56 billion shares worth ₱2.89 billion.

"There are no new positive developments to perk up sentiment and some investors may be unloading down their positions ... ahead of the Easter break next week," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities.

"The focus was mainly on the third liners, particularly mining, and volumes are weak, indicating the lack of interest," he added. AFP

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# BUSINESS

## Bangko Sentral seen further easing foreign exchange policies

### Simplifying documentary requirements, procedures

By Doris C. Dumlao

CEBU CITY—THE BANGKO SENTRAL ng Pilipinas yesterday said there was still room to further ease foreign exchange policies to make the country's regulatory framework more responsive to the needs of a more dynamic economy.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said there were two areas that the monetary authorities could work on: The simplification of documentary requirements for transactions, in need of BSP approval and the streamlining of procedures.

Dating a bid-ask swiss basis, BSP managing director for research Cyd Amador said: "We continue to keep the ground fertile with reforms."

"The BSP has its eyes open. It is aware that liberalization opens the economy to some risks in terms of increasing vulnerability as well as risk of vicissitudes of the global financial market," Tetangco said.

He said forex liberalization would result in the following:

–easing of financing constraints which would allow countries with limited savings to attract financing for productive purposes;

–enabling investors to diversify portfolios, thus minimizing risks, and to earn higher rates of return and lower cost of capital;

–additional liquidity and depth in the foreign exchange and financial markets;

–macroeconomic policy discipline, and

–reduction of the regulatory burden and administrative costs.

Effective April 2, the BSP will allow banks to hold foreign exchange for their own account equivalent to as much as 25 percent of unimpaired capital or $50 million, whichever is lower, up from the previous restriction of 2.5 percent or $5 million. It will also relax some restrictions on non-commercial purchase of dollars as well as the amount of outward investments by residents.

Amador said the BSP viewed the forex liberalization process in 2005 as even before the reversal influx of foreign portfolio funds to the Philippines and other Asian emerging markets.

"The objective is really to upgrade the foreign exchange framework. We believe that the conditions are particularly favorable at the moment. There's much improvement with the macroeconomic fundamentals," she said.

She added that recent developments in the region—particularly the commitment among Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to allow free flow of capital by 2015—likewise compelled Philippine monetary authorities to finetune its forex framework now.

"The message we'd like to send is that, there's a window of opportunity while which we underwrite the reforms. The best time to upgrade the locks in the ship is not during a time of stormy weather but when the weather is calm and steady," she said.

While the Philippines now has an open current account system, she said there were still some restrictions on the capital account in both the inflows and outflows side.

TRADERS transact their business at the stock exchange in Makati. Share prices yesterday closed 0.42 percent lower to continue investors' cautious profit-taking mode after the peso's gains hit a fresh 10-month high. The composite index finished 20.01 points lower at 3,158.84 after trading between 3,149.23 and 3,181.48. The broader all-share index fell 0.44 points or 0.42 percent to 1,029.65. —

## Aussie miner starts Acoje drilling

AUSTRALIAN FIRM SUKHA MINING & resource Indiab. in Philippine mining prospects as it starts drilling for nickel and cobalt deposits in Acoje, Zambales.

"We are very excited about the Acoje project. The property is quite large with an area of 11 kilometers by 5 kilometers. Its reported resources have increased only on a 1.2-kilometer area. There is definitely a huge potential for undiscovered minerals in this area," Sukha Managing director Robert Gregory said in a statement.

Gregory said Acoje was one of the few projects worldwide that had produced platinum group metals (PGM) with nickel and chromite outside the producing areas of South Africa's Bushveld, Zimbabwe, Stillwater complex at Montana of the United States, and Siberia.

The Perth-based company has also started conditional talks to proceed to farm-in deals with other companies, signing of a Letter of Intent with local firm Foreglance Resources Philippines Inc. for the joint exploration and development of the southern portion of the Acoje project. Sukha also signed a technical services agreement with Cagayan for various mining projects in the country.

Chromite and nickel are key components in the production of stainless steel, which is forecast to grow 6 percent this year and is driven by China's rapid economic expansion. "Sukha is well positioned to benefit from the revitalization of the Philippine mining industry as well as the continuing strong commodity price cycle," Gregory added.

Acoje was one of southeast Asia's largest metallurgical chromite mines until it was forced to close down in 1995 due to low commodity prices and limited access to capital for expansion. Sukha picked up the mothballed project in 1995.

## *Dutch firm to infuse $20M into project of Manila Mining*

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

NETHERLANDS-BASED ANGLO PHILEX ventures B.V., a unit of mining giant Anglo American Plc, is investing $20 million in Manila Mining Corp.'s copper-gold project in Sumilao del Norte for a 40-percent stake in the mining project.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), Manila Mining said it had signed a farm-in agreement yesterday with Anglo Investments BV, a wholly-owned subsidiary of London-based Anglo American Plc.

The project would involve 250 hectares of the 2,463 hectares covered by Manila Mining's renewed exploration permit, known as the Kalayaan Project.

Under the farm-in agreement, Anglo will fund the project's "pre-feasibility phase"—a study that will determine whether the project is worth pursuing—at an estimated cost of $20 million within two-to-three years.

The $20-million investment will give Anglo a 40-percent interest in the project.

Anglo deposited $2 million of the total investment into the mined entity over time for Kalayaan project.

The agreement also calls for the formation of a joint venture company called Kalayaan Copper-Gold Resources Inc., to which the Kalayaan project will be transferred.

Depending on the outcome of the exploration work and Anglo's pre-feasibility study, Anglo and Manila Mining would consider undertaking a final feasibility phase which will determine whether banks could provide more financing for the project.

The final investment decision was estimated to cost $15 million to 20 million. Anglo will fund the additional work to gain another 20 percent interest in the Kalayaan project, Manila Mining disclosed to the Philippine Securities Exchange Commission (Sec) under its investment.

Manila Mining started mining operations in Placer, Surigao del Norte in 1981. Until 2001, it was producing gold bullion through a Carbon-In-Pulp (CIP) plant. The company was producing copper concentrates containing gold, silver and copper from its copper flotation plant until July 2001 when it suspended mining and milling operations after its authority to operate its tailings dam expired. Despite this, Manila Mining said several companies have expressed interest in the Kalayaan gold mine in the southern province of Surigao del Norte.


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Publish Asia 2007
The No. 1 Networking Platform in Asia

PUBLISH ASIA 2007 OPENS TODAY

The Publish Asia 2007 Conference opens today at the Manila Hotel, with President Arroyo as guest of honor. The conference is organized by Ria Asia, in cooperation with Publish Asia 2007 Philippine Committee (composed of the country's top four newspapers).

Murdoch MacLennan, chief executive officer of UK's Telegraph Media Group, will start off the convention, with a keynote presentation focusing on the convention's theme "Reinventing for Today's Business, Creating for Tomorrow's Challenges." MacLennan will discuss issues relevant to the publishing industry, like the major challenges it is currently facing; the importance of harnessing new technology to re-invent and re-structure; as well as the significance of high ethical standards and quality.

Today's convention will likewise discuss digital media, as well as business and strategy for the newspaper industry, including digital strategy, cross-promotional efforts, practical insights, and ways to attract new audiences.

"Without a doubt, the topics prepared for the two-day convention will provide insights for participants on ways by which they can deal with the evolving publishing industry," said Ria Asia managing director Elaine Wong.

Some of the moderators who will headline today's sessions are Philippine Daily Inquirer's EVP and CEO David Valdes; Ria Germany research director and deputy CEO Manfred Werfel; Singapore Press Holding's Chew V. Ming; and Jo Christian Oterhals of Norway's VG Multimedia.

Around 400 delegates from all over Asia, including CEOs, presidents, CIOs, COOs, general managers, editors and writers from some of the region's leading newspapers are expected to join the conference.

"Publish Asia is the number one networking platform in the newspaper industry where people get together to learn from each other," said Bettie Atienza, Manila Bulletin public relations officer, and Publish Asia Philippine committee member. "In an industry where there are a lot of challenges, the only way to go is to keep on learning. Learning should not be limited to one's country. There should be an exchange of ideas between colleagues from other countries."

MANILA BULLETIN The Manila Times INQUIRER STAR


## MetroPac, DMCI earmark ₱5B for '07 Maynilad capex

MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES INC. IS EARmarking ₱5 billion for its capital expenditure this year, primarily for operations and system improvement, officials of Metro Pacific Investment Corp. said DMCI Holdings Inc., said.

The Metro Pacific (MPIC) Holdings team won a bidding last year for the right to operate the concession of Maynilad.

"When we bid for the company, the bid was divided into a minimum bid and a supplemental bid. The minimum bid is the amount the government would take, while the supplemental bid is the capex. It's a commitment to spend on the company whether it is used for repaying debt or for capex. Our plan is to pay out of rehabilitation by paying the debt and to improve on the network by spending on capex," MPIC president Jose Ma. Lim said.

Lim reiterated his optimism that Maynilad would be out of rehabilitation this year after the MPIC-DMCI consortium resolved the company's ₱245 million in obligations to creditors and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

DMCI's ₱1.35 joint venture with Metro Pacific Investments Corp. earlier bought an 83.67-percent stake of Maynilad for ₱35.6 billion.

Maynilad distributes water in Caloocan, Manila, parts of Quezon City, Pasay, Valenzuela, Parañaque, Muntinlupa, Malabon, Navotas, Las Piñas and certain areas in Cavite. —Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

## Intel introduces 'classmate' PC

INTEL CORP HAS ANNOUNCED PLANS TO introduce this year Intel-powered personal computers designed for schoolchildren through a five-year, $1-billion program that would initially cover 25 developing countries including the Philippines.

Called the classmate PC, the "affordable yet fully-functional" laptop that runs on Intel Celeron M processor is described as an education-oriented mobile computer, said Intel in statement.

The Santa Clara, California-based company is making the move following successful, serious deployments in Brazil and Mexico last year.

Intel said the classmate PC—"a personal learning assistant that looks like a textbook"—supports a collaborative learning environment specifically in primary schools.

"[Classmate PC] is part of Intel's on-going commitment and dedication to equip children around the world with technology that would help advance learning and development," said Willy Agustinus, Intel's country manager for the Philippines.

Volume shipments as well as pilot programs for the use of the classmate PC would be undertaken within the year in 25 countries including Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Germany.

Also, the first plans for the PCs to be available in English, Arabic, simplified Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Turkish.

The classmate PC is part of the Intel World Ahead Program to tap the combined power of technology, curriculum and teachers to improve student readiness and competitiveness.

To do this, Agustinus said the company was working with ministries of education in at least 30 countries to train 1.6 million teachers by the end of the decade and hopefully benefit more than 100 million students.

"The official roll-out [will] be working with the 21st century skills they need, such as collaboration and critical thinking, to help ensure that they're prepared to succeed in the knowledge-based economy," he said. Armand W. Domingo

# Tower of Peza

THE POLITICAL MIGHT OF "TERRY MITY mwan Gonzales Opposition" kept the beachfront Fort Bonifacio condominium—albeit unpublicized—is now worrying big businessmen.

It's been other than the little-known "BIG versus Peza" dispute on electricity rates in the so-called special economic zones.

Peza is the Philippine Economic Zone Authority, which encourages large industrial estates. The estates have their own rates, as if they are not part of the Philippines.

ERC is the Energy Regulatory Commission which, under the Epira (the power reform law), sets the electricity rates for everybody, including the government.

But PEZA continues to set the power rates in the special economic zones—a function it claims to have kept, despite the seven-year-old Epira, apparently due to technical reasons.

A provision in Epira seeks to remove the power to set rates from the zone to the zones by repealing a similar "Section 11 (c)" of RA 7916, which created the Peza.

Now, the Epira law does not contain "Section 11 (c)." Peza's authority to set power rates in the zones is continued in "Section 12 (c)."

But the word "12" instead of "11."

It must be a typo, right? Wrong, according to the Department of Justice.

BIG boss Raul Gonzalez opines that, because "Section 12 (c)" does not exist in Epira law, the vehicle contains "Section 11 (c)." Peza may still set the power rates.

I am not kidding! In fact, Gonzalez says that Congress must pass a new law to amend the freaking typo. Erm, I mean, the flaw.

With such an opinion, Gonzalez concluded, ERC and cohorts need the Epira.

Still, I really cannot say what can happen to our zones and cities without special economic zones, if lawmakers move to the zones as a result of such an imbalance.

I only know that special zones are just like fiefdoms of powerful politicians, and they are enjoying such lucrative businesses as...well, smuggling.

But that matters, our group already corrected the power generation business in the zones. It must be a town of influence in the zones.

* * *

It seems that some officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs have liked the contractor for its "machine-readable passport" bid: MRP project.

The DFA awarded the project to a certain BCA International some seven years ago, which would shoulder 100 percent of the cost under a BOT scheme.

Today, thanks to the diligence of the DFA officials who are trying to change the contractor with somebody else that they apparently like, our will have to MOP.

Only the public—particularly the more 9 million OFWs—therefore must suffer the indignities of carrying Philippine passports abroad.

In airports in the United States, for instance, they do "machine" checks of passengers. They happen to choose mostly Filipinos for their "random" checks.

Maybe Filipinos are just born as lucky. Or perhaps it's because, in this day and age, our passports are still not yet MRP. Hmm.

But, by hook or hungry stick, okay?

Well, our country has yet to fulfill a commitment to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on the issuance of MRP.

That's why, seven years ago, the DFA formerly (the late Senator Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople) contracted BCA International for the upgrading project.

Last December, the DFA terminated BCA International's contract.

A few months after, the DFA had a BCA International subsidiary sign an agreement with—the Bangko Sentral on another passport-upgrading project, costing only P1 billion.

And to "the original contractor, the BCA International, asked for payment for the work it has done, claiming P1 billion in compensation.

Of course, the CBP won't contest the claim. That's why the two sides are now locked in last-ending tug-of-war in the court cases.

Never mind that, whenever the DFA questioned the "financial capability" of a contractor, it presented millions of dollars of credit lines and owned its paid-up capital.

Now, in all that "open letter" against the contractor, word has it that somebody at the office of consular affairs figured prominently.

It was none other than "acting" Assistant Secretary Lourdes Yparraguirre.

Again, that's just "acting!" Domingo who? Well, according to my info, he heads the office in charge of passport issuance. He's said to have the rank of DFA Secretary Alberto Romulo.

Even my source is confused!

Well, Romulo-Jr. not sign one particular publication like the Supreme Court. In E.O. memo ordered that, unless the P1-billion BCA international contract

**BREAKTIME**

*Conrado R. Bawad III*

BOT project put the BCA International's stand over another through room, there would be a shortage of passport paper.

Oh yeah? But why can't we order a shipment right away?

Somewhere lurking in the foreign mist may be a "preferred" supplier. From what I gathered, somebody with the initials "RC" has already traveled to Europe with a DFA big official.

* * *

Over at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, it seems that the airport authorities are trying to find ways to go around the "tanak" problem.

You see, every bright guys thought it best to do away with the duty-free concept on this path of airplanes taking off and landing on Mars.

Thanks to the pseudo-constitution, one of only two successes of the Ramos is hardly used, duty-free items were to be exempt. One wrong move of its implementation, and you may see a riot on the roads.

Wonder if wonders: it is said that the Paranaque city hall issued the building permits and all that.

And so, accordingly, Alfonso Cusi, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority, operator of the NAIA, they are looking for alternative solutions.

Wise. Erm, but why can't you just locate the building?

# US, RP firms ink coal-to-fuel project deals

## Local company secures technical licenses for $2.8-B fuel project

By Abigail L. Ho

AMERICAN FIRM HEADQUARTERED in and local company HMWB Corp. have signed several agreements worth almost $10 million, granting the latter the necessary licenses to participate in proposed $2.8-billion coal-to-fuel project.

HMWB president Antonio Ho said the agreements signed between the two firms last Friday included the evaluation/project funding contract, pre-front end engineering and design (pre-FEED) study agreement, technology license agreement, basic engineering design services agreement, technical services agreement and content copyright agreement.

A total of 10 agreements were signed, Ho said, with the technology license, basic engineering design services, technical services and value added supply agreements all divided into two separate agreements each—one for the direct coal liquefaction technology and indirect coal liquefaction technology, the licenses for which are held by Headwaters.

The signing of the 10 agreements would pave the way for the start of the second phase of the three-phase coal-to-fuels project that HMWB is undertaking, he said.

The Phase 2 program contract covers the entire second phase of the three-phase project. This includes process engineering design of the pre-FEED technology licensing, and the construction of the Fischer-Tropsch Process Demonstration Unit (FTPDU) or a facility that turns coal into liquid fuels.

The Fischer-Tropsch co-development agreement will ensure that all existing and future improvements as well as core intellectual property rights will belong to Headwaters.

However, Headwaters and HMWB "are willing to share future revenue from the first 100,000 barrels per day commercial capacity at 25 percent of the unit value of the license revenue collected as return of investment to the FTPDU program contributor/investor, excluding US government funding/agency grants."

Under their technology as equity investment agreement, Ho said Headwaters will fund Headwaters would remain part of the license for the entire project. The involved total investment of $22.45 million.

The proposed coal liquefaction facility is expected to yield 44,200 barrels/day of ultra-clean fuels.

Apart from purchase, diesel and JP8, the facility can also generate 47.2 megawatts (MW) of power, which can be channeled to the grid.

Ho said that with the addition of five trains, Jollibee will have a total of 16 stores in the US.

Also, a Red Ribbon branch will open on April 6 in Las Vegas, said Ang, who is concurrent country head for Red Ribbon franchise operations in the US.

Tomorrow Ang, Jollibee's country head for the US, told the business that the store in Las Vegas will open on April 22, while the one in Valley, Northern California will start operations at a later date.

The stores are located in northern and southern California.

"We will believe that the US is a lucrative market because of the growing Filipino community," Ang said. "This is the biggest number of stores [to open] in one year, which will put us to the driver's seat, compared with two to three operating/chains."

In the third quarter, Red Ribbon recorded $2.4 million to seven-week sales from its 16 stores.

Jollibee officials last year said Red Ribbon will open new stores over the US with a budget of roughly $100,000 per store.

A BRANCH of the popular Filipino fast food chain in Daly City, California. Jollibee hopes to open more stores along the west coast of the US mainland this year.

## *Jollibee in aggressive expansion stance, to open 5 stores in US*

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FAST FOOD GIANT JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. is ushered its foray of a slowing United States economy as it pumps in $2 million for five stores that will open in Las Vegas and California this year.

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# SuperFerry, Smart link up for mobile payment

CELLULAR SERVICES PROVIDER Smart Communications Inc. has forged a partnership with SuperFerry to jointly develop a passenger ticketing and fare collection system using the Smart Money electronic financial services platform.

This will enable passengers to pay for their tickets with just a few clicks on their mobile phones. The service will bring Smart closer to meeting the Smart Mobility vision, the company's first mobile-based, universal transport payment system designed for the mobile operator's estimated 25 million subscribers.

"Our tie-up with SuperFerry is our third major partnership announced in less than a month's time," Smart president and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno said in a statement. "Our vision is to make the Smart Money electronic cash transfer network can be accessed and used via any mobile phone for all-in-one payment card for the increasingly mobile Filipino. This will be the first mobile-based transport payment system. In two, four, tell and six transport services."

The service will be available during the 80th Fiesta. Blue Tribune 4/9

# DOTC hit ...

From page B1

Chinese government to finance a 2TR prepayment project and issue a Philippine sovereign guarantee.

"To our knowledge, ARC submitted that first complete project. It is DOTC for the National Broadband Network on 15 December 2006," ARC president Nathaniel Santiago said in his letter. "To date, more than 60 days from date of submission of ARC's proposal, DOTC has not conducted the bidding evaluation required under the rules."

According to the project proponent, the rules on unsolicited proposals require the agency or local government unit to perform the initial evaluation of a project proposal within 60 days of the proposal, the qualification of proponent, and the suitability of commercial arrangement and propriety of risk allocation within 60 days of submission of a complete proposal.

Quoting the implementing rules and regulations of the Build-Operate-Transfer Law (RA 7718), Santiago pointed out that "the [DOTC] shall advise the proponent whether it accepts the proposal, rejects the proposal or requires the proponent the like original proponent, or if it invites the proposal."

"Once a proponent has been recognized as the original proponent of a project, the agency shall not entertain any other similar proposals until bids are solicited, or if negotiations between the agency and the original proponent have failed," he added in his letter.

The ARC proposal also states that the company will operate the network and will charge a percentage below the lowest price of local telecommunication firms, particularly a range of 50 centavos to 75 centavos per call.

SY

# Sy named best female banker in Asia Pacific

TERESITA "TESSIE" SY, CEO and chair of Equitable PCI Bank, was named winner of "The Asian Banker Award for Women in the Financial Services Industry 2006" during The Asian Banker Leadership awards ceremonies on March 20 in Jakarta, Indonesia, and The Asian Banker, the award-giving body.

The rest of the most innovative and influential women in banking in the Asia-Pacific region, the nominees to be an inspiration, and could not be a more deserving recipient of special recognition," according to the chairman of the Singapore-based company for Sy.

In another category by and BSP president Nestor Tan were joint winners of "The Asian Banker Leadership Award 2006" for the Philippines, making them two of the wise, the only two Filipino bankers in the region.

Under this category, the chairman and its and Tan's aims to transform the emerging institution into a bigger bank of the center of excess investment. Recent investment norms announced by BSP president said.

"The merger of the rare institutions will further raise the bar of competition for the Philippine banking sector, setting the pace for the entire industry to become more synchronized with the greater Asian financial markets community by allowing only the highest standards of excellence in their institutions," according to the nominee.

"Never since 14 months for leadership at a country level, effectively citing the winners as the top economic fundamentals in a region that is comprised of Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Another Filipino banker, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. executive vice chair Gene E. Moore, was one of the two awardees of "The Asian Banker Lifetime Achievement Awards 2006."

# BSP rolls out loan facility for countryside dev't

By Doris C. Dumlao

CEBU CITY—THE BANGKO SENTral ng Pilipinas yesterday rolled out its first industrial guarantee rediscounting facility to help banks scale up their lending capabilities and pump-prime the countryside.

During the launching of the electronic rediscounting system (ERS) or eRediscounting at the Cebu International Convention Center, the BSP also signed a memorandum of agreement with 10 local banks that had expressed interest in using the new platform.

Rediscounting is a credit facility of the BSP to help banks liquefy their portfolio by refinancing the loan they extend to their clients. Under this facility, banks can rediscount their peso, dollar and yen loans granted to finance micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), farming, food production, transport, warehousing, tourism, housing and agriculture loans using long-duration period.

With eRediscounting, an Internet-based platform for rediscounting, qualified banks in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao may conduct transactions, such as loan applications and payments with the BSP on a real-time basis.

The paperless rediscounting scheme is seen as a big improvement from the previous manual system which takes three days to process before the loan proceeds are released to borrower banks.

"This is another backbone in moving the economy. By facilitating credit to the countryside, by increasing money," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said. "The improvement in refinancing technology will translate to better access to expenses and small and medium enterprises, especially those outside Metro Manila."

Tetangco said the new platform would identify, standardize and boost the BSP's rediscounting, one of the BSP's key monetary tools.

Cebu Bankers Club president Hernando Ibarra said the introduction of rediscounting would give banks

for greater convenience that was unimaginable 20 years ago.

"The rediscounting with the BSP means more credit flowing to our countryside, particularly to our partners, not to forget me," said Ibarra, who is also vice president for Philippine National Bank's retail banking in Visayas.

The 10 rediscounting which inked a participation agreement with the BSP yesterday include Cebu Investment Bank (Cebinbank), Planters Development Bank (Philbank), Philippine Development Bank (PDB), Rural Bank (RB) Balog-Lapyal, SB Finance Corporation, RB Inabanga-Bien Unido, Rural Bank (RB) Dalaguete, RB Danao City Development Bank (Zenbo), Rural Bank (RB) Balog-Lapyal, SB Finance Corporation, RB Inabanga-Bien Unido, Rural Bank (RB) Dalaguete (Zamboanga del Norte), RB Dumaguete (Mercantile Commercial) Inc. and First Valley Bank Inc. (Lanao del Sur).

Senior executives of big commercial banks also affirmed their participation. United Coconut Planters Bank, Equitable PCIBank, Union Bank of the Philippines and Bank of the Philippine Islands.

The real-time delivery of credit to banks is seen to accelerate the turnover of money available for re-lending.

The BSP has set aside a revolving fund of P20 billion for the peso rediscounting facility and $500 million for the US dollar and peso rediscounted refinancing facility.

IN THIS ISSUE
- 'Bittersweet' health advice /D1
- Despedida for the birthday gal /D4

# LIFESTYLE

Jill Ellis, shown here at the new Marcus Foster Recreation Center in Philadelphia, took a group of city kids with no formal training and turned them into an official swim team.

'The premise was swimming, but I'd be lying if I said there weren't any life lessons'

ACTOR Terrence Howard portrays swim coach Ellis in the movie "Pride."

# Real-life model for coach in new 'Pride' movie says there is much left to do

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—THE inner-city youth swimming program here could have inspired many movies, with its stories of children jumping into the pool as novices and climbing out with college scholarships and foundations for greater success.

But when Lionsgate decided to make a film about the program, it chose to focus on the coach and founder, Jim Ellis. "Pride" depicts Ellis' first year working for the Philadelphia Department of Recreation, when he formed a group of inner-city black kids with no formal training into an official swim team.

"I had to stretch it there or four times before I realized it was really about me, not just my team," Ellis said. "That was heavy."

He might have known it was coming, though. Actor Terrence Howard, now his Hollywood alter-ego, had spent about two months with Ellis, observing the 54-year-old's every practice and taking Ellis' coaching advice on his own strokes.

The experience showed Howard that to play Ellis, "you just have to care."

"I used to find his spirit, his motivation, and look at some of the people he was impressed by—[Supreme Court Justice] Thurgood Marshall and football star] Jim Brown...and try and emulate some of them at the same time," said the actor known for his Oscar-nominated performance in "Hustle & Flow."

Ellis' career began when his father pushed him off a boat at age 6 and told him to stay afloat. The sport came easily to him. While swimming competitively at Occanes University, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) east of Philadelphia, he took a job as a senior safety instructor at a city recreation center. It was a natural progression to starting a swim team, a which just happened to be the city's first all-black squad.

More than 20 years later, he is at a new recenter—Marcus Foster, the one featured in the movie—and the room is more diverse and much more recognized. But he is still the same coach.

"I consider myself an artist," he said. "Each kid is my sculpture."

To tweak a swimmer, he uses a technique that former team members say is a bit hands-on.

"I just try to appeal to their better sense of judgment," said Ellis, 54. "It's rough love, but like cutting vegetables. I try to make them see all the hard work is good for you."

He was Ellis is less sensational than the movie may lead viewers to believe. He has never punched a racist cop, come close to drowning a drug lord or screamed a city councilwoman who held the fate of his rec center in her hands.

Instead, he has seen communities come together around pizza and potted cakes to support the team, put his swimmers up in borrowed beds in his parents' basement in Pittsburgh for a most three, and held back many when his team received a standing ovation at one of his swimmers broke records and qualified for the Olympic trials in one night.

Like the movie, however, it is not only praise. his team was occasionally met with consternation from more established programs, mostly out of race, and the perception that black athletes are better football or basketball players than swimmers.

"We'd get remarks like 'the guys is down the hall,' or 'the football field is down the way,'" Ellis said. "We actually got more strength from that. It made us more determined to be successful."

Success came quickly, then became the norm. A number of his swimmers have come close to making the US Olympic team, and hundreds have earned college scholarships because of their talents in the pool.

Jamie Wells, 32, credits the 20 years of swimming for Ellis with getting him into one of Philadelphia's top charter schools and winning him a full scholarship to the University of Virginia.

"The vision he had for me made me into the swimmer I was and the man I am," said the Philadelphia emergency room nurse. "The promise was swimming, but I'd be lying if I said there weren't any life lessons. He just told us to listen, it all out there and have no regrets...give all you can whether in the pool, the classroom or other parts of life."

Ellis is still looking ahead. He said he hopes the movie will inspire a wealthy philanthropist to build top-flight pools in the inner city, or barring that, will at least spur more people to take up swimming.

His biggest hopes, of course, are for his swimmers.

"I still don't have a world record or an American record. I've never sent anyone to the Olympics," Ellis said. "Yeah, there's still a lot to do."

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# Learn more about your aches

"UNDERSTANDING PAIN" IS THE COVER story of the Healthy Options Lifestyle Newsdigest March/April 2007 issue.

The magazine features several articles aimed at helping people better understand the risks, signs and symptoms, prevention and treatment of some common pains.

Find out how Celadrin, a natural product, works. Check out "Living with Gout" and learn about its treatment and prevention.

Also in the magazine are do's and don'ts for managing arthritis and "Migraine and its Common Triggers."

A problem of many women is tackled in "Dysmenorrhea: Menstrual Pain Relief."

The Healthy Options Lifestyle Newsdigest is offered free to customers. Visit any of the store's branches at: level 1, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City; Rustan's Supermarket, Makati City; level 2, Pensiol Supermall, Filinvest, Alabang; ground level, Ayala Center, Cebu City; lower ground floor, SM City North EDSA; level 2, SM City Manila; Greenbelt, Ayala Center, Makati City; level 2, SM Megamall 5, EDSA, Mandaluyong City; SM Philippines, SM Sta. Rosa, Laguna; SM Mall of Asia; Hill Club, and High Street, The Fort. Visit www.healthyoptions.com.ph.

Shown in photo is the latest issue of Healthy Options Lifestyle Newsdigest with their iconic sexy titled "Understanding Pain."

# Keep cholesterol under control

ENSURE YOUR HEART'S HEALTH BY KEEPing your cholesterol levels in check all the time.

One important and relatively easy way to do this is to watch what you eat. The American Heart Association says fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes tend to be low in fat and have no cholesterol. They are also good sources of dietary fiber, complex carbohydrates and vitamins.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends eating foods high in complex carbohydrates and fiber. Large amounts of soluble fiber, such as pectin and oat bran, in a diet low in saturated fat, may reduce total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol.

LDL or low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is considered bad cholesterol. The American Heart Association says it can slowly build up and clog the inner walls of the arteries restricting the flow of blood in the heart and brain.

Soluble fiber like oats has been shown to help lower blood cholesterol, thus reducing the risk of coronary heart disease. A high-fiber diet may also help reduce the risk of diabetes and colon and rectal cancer.

To make the most of a high-fiber diet, AHA also offers these other tips:

+Replace low-fiber foods (white bread, white rice, cereals and chips) with high-fiber foods (whole-grain bread, brown rice, fruits and vegetables).

+Try to eat more raw vegetables and fresh fruit, including skins where appropriate. Cooking vegetables can reduce fiber content.

+Eat high-fiber foods at every meal. Bran cereal for breakfast is a good start. Try to include some fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans in your diet as well.

+If necessary, take a dietary fiber supplement.

+Increase your fiber intake gradually to give your body time to adjust. Drink six to eight 8-oz. glasses of fluids a day.

Various products are now available in the market to make it easy to switch to a healthy diet. The Cambodia Honey Ore Leaf was the result of a partnership between Cambodia Bakeries Philippines Inc. and Quadee Chan. It combines the nutritive goodness of honey and corn.

Studies conducted in the United States suggest that dark-colored honey, such as buckwheat honey, contains higher levels of antioxidants than light-colored varieties. Antioxidants fight disease-causing oxygen free radicals.

Studies presented at the 2006 American Chemical Society suggested that honey might have the same level of disease-fighting antioxidants as some fruits.

Quaker Oats with the cholesterol-reducing oat fiber can help lower the risk of developing heart disease and certain types of cancers.

# Make it a fruitful summer

WANTING TO SHED THE EXCESS pounds you gained over the holidays before hitting the beaches this summer?

Why not get into a five-a-day fruit program in the next few weeks?

Combined with a good and healthy workout, you can trim the fat from your body without depriving it of much needed nutrients.

Fruit Magic, the country's premier juice bar, promotes the five-a-day system advocated by the World Health Organization. It believes that including fresh fruits in your daily diet can help a lot in making your body fit for summer.

Mari Bautista, CEO of Fruit Magic, said fresh fruits contained natural sugars like fructose and were packed with vitamins and minerals needed to fuel the body without the fats.

Many store fruits are rich in fiber, he said including them in the diet would have the added benefit of cleansing and detoxifying the body.

For those interested in actively slimming this, Fruit Magic has the following tips:

▶Fight fat with fiber—Fruits that are rich in fiber help absorb fats and cholesterol, allowing the body to remove toxins by flushing out these unhealthy substances. Fiber-rich fruits like avocado, papaya, guava, starapple, orange, apricots, mango, strawberries, apples, kiwi and grapefruit can help you slim down faster by absorbing excess fat.

◀Detoxify with citrus—Oranges, lemons and other fruits rich in Vitamin C are not only great to drink but can also help remove toxins in the body for a slimming diet; it is best to take freshly squeezed citrus fruits since they have the highest concentration of Vitamin C.

▶Mind your calories, too—A fruit diet can provide the body with much needed energy without the fatty calories. Fruits also do not give you that full-belly feeling. Control your craving for crunchy food by eating more fruits.

▶Lose weight faster but add variety—Typical weight lost during a three-day fruit diet program can be from one to three kilos. However, a diet consisting only of fruits can lose you slightly weaker at the start. Fruit diets containing of citrus-rich fruits can also lead to diarrhea. To avoid these inconveniences, mix different types of fruits.

▶Slim and glow—Fruit diets not only allow the body to lose weight, but also help it rejuvenate. Most fruits in fruit-juice form for the diet, making it more supple and vibrant, as the body flushes out the accumulated toxins from eating unhealthy food.

**FRUIT Magic** can help you start your fresh fruit diet.

**FRUITS** that help absorb fats and cholesterol and flushes them out.

**YOU** can enjoy fruits fresh or as juices and shakes.

If you cannot decide what fruits to have during the diet program or do not want the hassle of preparing them, just go to the nearest Fruit Magic juice bar and order a freshly squeezed serve, all-natural shake or juice.

**ADIDAS MDR** store owner Philip Su and marketing manager Gisely Cacanido with guests

# Star-studded store opening

ADIDAS, A PREMIER SPORTING brand, has opened a store in the largest mall in Asia.

The event was attended by some of the hottest names in sports, entertainment, music and fashion.

It was inducted in by the country's National Basketball Association All-Star National anthem. The new Adidas store will house the All-Star Weekend collection and the NBA Originals collection.

Aim to be correct by the new store are other Adidas premium lines including choice pieces for running, basketball, soccer and gym.

The opening of the Adidas store was graced by stars from different basketball leagues. They included Philippine Basketball Association player Larry Rodriguez and icon Star Magazine and Bonnie Magsaysay.

Popular JC Intal of the University Athletic Association of the Philippines and Philippine Basketball League (PBL) were also there.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association stars represented by players Jay-Jay Taganas, Ola Steven and, of course, the PBL, Bey Guevarra.

Actor and model Dida Bavalos completed the star-studded lineup for the store opening. Guest performer was the band Spongecola.

The new Adidas Mall of Asia concept store is located at the ground floor, South wing side of the SM Mall of Asia.

**ADIDAS** store executives, basketball players and other celebrities cut the ceremonial ribbon.

# Specialists stress need to stimulate early learning

MAKE IT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT brain development starts as early as infancy.

In fact, experts say a baby even starts responding to all types of stimuli even while inside the mother's womb.

During the event Mommy Bo meets with Sweet Infants, a special media gathering at Makati Shangri-La hotel, experts stressed the need for the right nutrition and development activities to ensure a child's proper mental development.

Infants Legislator and her year-old son Jacobs are the newest endorsers of Gain Plus Advance.

Dr. Marvelous "Bluth" G. Bernardino III, a diplomate of the Philippine Pediatric Society and a fellow of the Philippine Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, said a lacking baby in the mother's womb is a clear sign of early learning impairment.

The kick is the fetus' way of telling its mother it is experiencing discomfort, he said.

Another sign of early brain development, he said, was the newborn's awareness of his/her mother's presence.

As they grow, Gran said babies de-

**CHEWN** Infants Legislator and year-old Jacobs endorse Gain Plus Advance.

velop curiosity about everything in their environment. Among other things, their eyes follow moving objects, hence, the practice of having mobiles on cribs.

He added that babies develop a visual preference for faces and, even as their young age, show a liking for glimpsed faces.

Gran said many factors affect a child's early learning development. Genetics is one such factor. Children inherit the parents' intellectual capacity. Environment also plays a role as the choice of toys and activities is important. They should stimulate a child's thinking process.

Star Drafting Power of Gymboree Play and Music supported the notion of a strong link between playing and learning. Gymboree offers an interactive parent-child program for newborns and children up to 5 years of age.

Parent and a child's brain is most active in the first three years, growing to 80 percent of its adult size. Parents and caregivers have to nurture a child's development during this time by exposing him/her to stimulating age-appropriate activities, she said.

Gran also underscored the importance of proper nutrition in early learning. The right amount of protein and carbohydrates support a child's intellectual development. Gain Plus Advance has a unique combination of nutrients like DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), choline, and choline to help support the child's brain, vision and memory during the formative stage.

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WESTERN UNION

# Lenses keep you focused on your game

CRISTINA Garcia

NIKE VISION ENSURES that you are at the top of your game with its different eyewear enhancements designed to suit your particular passion.

For extreme sports aficionados, the Nike Flying Lenses feature improved airflow that reduces fogging and enhances ventilation over standard lock-in frames. The glasses, which attach at the nose, remain in position even when the frame flexes for speech spaces.

The Nike Max Optics has an enlarged visual screen span that is 31 percent larger than that of the competition, letting you see more of your game. No more stained eyeballs, as more getting lost in the green: Nike Max Optics lets you live Sport Instinct.

Nike Vision also takes into account not only winning the race, but the actual journey through the tracks.

The Nike Max Speed Tint outdoor road glass with its magmound color, enhancing your eyes and enhancing visibility while you keep your eyes on the prize.

Enhancements help reduce fogging.

Adapt to any situation with the Nike Interchangeable. With no one lens suitable for all situations, the Nike Interchangeable allows you to switch lenses to suit your needs. The lenses are changed easily and are held securely by the frame. Nike Interchangeable is available in a number of Nike styles.

Other Nike eyewear enhancements include ventilated nose bridges that promote airflow to reduce fogging, and keep the frame in place even when you are moving at full speed.

Nike shades are available at all Nike Timegear stores, Rubatex Pasong Tamo, Technic Optical and Ideal Vision.

Different eyewear enhancements are designed to suit everyone's passion.

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# LIFESTYLE

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

## Take the bitter for the sweet

IT'S A FRUIT. A VEGETABLE and an herb rolled into one. It may be home but its presence is sweet music to diabetics.

This medicinal plant is known by different names and is cultivated around the world. In Japan it is called *nigakuri*; China, *fuhwei*; Indonesia, *pare*; India, *karela*; South America, bitter melon, *gourd*; and the Philippines, *ampalaya*.

Momordica charantia combines Greek and Latin words. Charantia is Greek for 'beautiful flower while momordica is Latin for bitter.

Said to have originated in Africa, the useful plant has been studied by many botanists and naturalists all over the world. Here are their findings:

### Humble but powerful

How a humble plant could have the power to control blood sugar levels amazes many, particularly doctors and researchers. Fred Marcus, author of "Insulin-Like Plants: A Remedy for Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes," and his colleagues have found that the vegetable had "excellent hypoglycemic effects" (lowers blood sugar).

In the Philippine Journal of Internal Medicine, doctors Bernardo A. Pendon and Ricardo E. Fernando of St. Luke's Hospital report that the unripe fruit alone prepared as tea can be very useful in the "treatment of diabetes."

### What is diabetes?

There are three types of diabetes.

Type 1 (insulin-dependent) is when the pancreas is unable to make insulin.

Type 2 (non-insulin dependent) is when the body is unable to use properly the insulin made by the pancreas.

Type 3 (gestational diabetes) is a form of glucose intolerance diagnosed in women during pregnancy.

Diabetes mellitus (from the Greek word *siphon* in the passing of water) has been around since ancient times. Today it is considered a chronic disease, aggravated by a way of life characterized by high carbohydrate/sugar diet and no exercise.

Complications arising from diabetes include heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, blindness, kidney/nervous systems/dental diseases.

### What's in this fruit?

A closer look at this vegetable reveals that it is packed with nutrients (like vitamins A, B, C, calcium, iron, alkaloids). It is not only used to control sugar problems but also urine blockages, infertility, constipation, hernias, HIV infections, fatty liver, hardening of the arteries. It has also been used for the Chinese as oxytocic/abortifacient and emetic (vomit inducing).

Most studies showed that compounds derived from the leaves and fruits contained hypoglycemic or sugar-lowering properties.

### Versatile

*Ampalaya* may be eaten fresh (as a salad), cooked (as a vegetable dish) or drunk as a

Back to

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN — BY JESS ABREN

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY — BY PH. LINCOD

NUTS — BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

LOVEBONITE — BY ELIZABETH CHONGUIO

KTOMO AND WEBBY — BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN MANLANG

BIRD MACHINE — BY MAHAR ABREN

MAMBOBOMBO — BY JOHNO TUDIO

TULOOK — BY PAPI LAND TATUM MILANES JNG

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

## DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 CDs' successors
4 Musical study
8 Worm and mites
14 Online option
15 Discussion
16 Polynesian
17 Big plane
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22 Of Ruritania
23 Hi-lo-hi-lo-hi-lo
24 Female
25 Dutch county
26 Miraculous cure-whose
30 Road bar maneuver
31 Type of downhill
34 Mole
35 Female mates
36 Schools' soft
38 "___ the Many" Ventures
41 Soothsayer
42 Caples on the Potomac
44 Metropolitan's genre
45 Maker's no-no
46 Bombing gang
47 Exam, often
48 Orange seed
49 Wrestle city on the Colorado
50 Puzzle theme
51 Publicize or suppose
53 Cocktail hook
54 Hot tea
55 Bad day for Brutus
56 Avoid Chief Wilson
57 Of bees
58 Dill seed
59 Tell 'em

DOWN
1 Nonsubscription operators
2 Rhythmic gyrate
3 Tomato salsina
4 Use name
5 Pen
6 Pays a fee
7 Bend in the air
8 Lookout's assignment
9 Green Linden land
10 Chair
11 Strong passage
12 Our Gal
13 Mint
21 Tree Season's follow
24 Antifogs at TV supper
27 Gift of the magi
28 Lummy and Mortimer
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31 Membership contracts
32 Lotto outing
33 Dundee dogger
34 Looked crossly
37 Like some cereals
39 Spring sound
40 Society's contrarian
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43 Sign on
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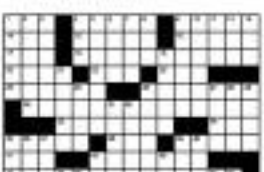
47 Log post
51 Classical choir member
52 Mistakes bit
54 Taboo place
57 Swings and
58 Do over
61 Military fitness report
63 Rock melody
64 Wrenched Nolan's
66 TV game show
67 "Ten Towers" poetic minute
68 Lessons for #1
69 Touch for a leprechaun
70 Part of MD

By Edgar Numpina
Bagnion, MA



Monday's Puzzle Solved

## HOROSCOPE

THIS WEEK TODAY Many of you have unusual emotional skills. You're definitely up to date and cutting-edge in whatever you do. You're highly individualistic. You stand on the head of your own street. You're imaginative, can dream to reality and can make your dreams to reality. You will likely have an important choice this week. Choose wisely.
Birthdate of: Hannah Gross, singer; Quentin Tarantino, director; Jane Krakowski, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Monitor the suggestions you receive. Try hard to improve your knowledge and skills through self-improvement. Be going back to school. Or online. Distance request your experience of the day.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) This is a good time to ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask questions from others. You also a good time to ask for things from others if you need them.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Various opportunities have to do with your career. Be open to new knowledge and self-improvement. Enjoy the success of others. This is not the time to go it alone.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) You must constantly remember that others are doing better to improve your job or job's better one now. Think of what you've learned and would like, and use that.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) Some positive thoughts. Remember that others are doing better. Career romances, new others, social invitations, and communications to others are favored. Be friendly.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Work hard to improve your skills. Be open to new ideas. Be willing to improve on beautiful! Is that you? Is that you? Is that you? It's you! It's you! It's you!

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime Licauco

# Reality's different levels or dimensions

HAVE YOU PONDERED WHY some people cannot believe in the existence of a metaphysical world even though they may have encounters with metaphysical beings?

I remember a friend who saw the ghost of his father in his living room after the father's burial. The ghost smiled then disappeared.

My friend, a highly rational and skeptical man, could not believe he saw his father's spirit because he did not believe in ghosts. He dismissed the incident as just a product of his own imagination.

"Maybe I just missed my father, and so my mind created and projected an image of him. But he wasn't really there," he said.

## Bias

Others dismiss ghosts and other metaphysical entities because of religious bias. The Christian religion teaches that when a person dies, his/her spirit goes to heaven, purgatory or to hell and, therefore, cannot return to earth. "Whatever is seen is the devil's work, or a product of one's imagination."

The great English essayist and thinker Sir Francis Bacon pointed out that some persons subjected a priori their views or opinions supposedly to him/her, he/she would do everything to preserve that belief. Even if there were better reasons to believe otherwise, he/she would make distinctions or rationalizations so that the original opinions or belief remained intact.

I saw examples of this tendency of the human mind quite often.

I once accompanied an American science writer to see our faith healers (psychic surgeons) at work. He saw the healer open the body of a patient with his bare hands, take out diseased tissues or blood clots, and close the opening without any trace of the procedure.

The American watched all this at close range and took lots of pictures.

When the process was over, the writer slumped on a chair in a room of shock. I was talking to him but he did not hear anything. The first sentence he uttered was, "I saw it, but I don't believe it!"

When his article came out in United Magazine, sister publication of Business, he declared that the whole process of bare-handed psychic surgery was completely fraudulent. But he could not explain how 10 grams of bloody tissues did the trick in front of him.

"The hand is faster than the eyes." He believed what could not have been the patient's body, the tissues or blood clots, or whatever they were, were hidden cleverly in the hands of the healer and did not really come from the patient's body.

This is still the opinion on psychic surgery of majority of western scientists. "It's simply sleight-of-hand or trickery."

## Different dimensions

But I think there is another explanation why some people cannot believe in ghosts, clairvoyance, past-life persons and other paranormal events. It has something to do with different levels or dimensions of reality.

We have, on the one hand, our common, day-to-day type of reality, which Aristotle called Ordinary Reality. But there is another way of perceiving the world, what Le Shan calls Clairvoyant Reality.

**The problem is that people using ordinary perception do not and cannot see other levels of reality. Thus, they cannot believe it exists. It "is" spirits and ghosts, or experience a supernatural event, one must somehow be in an altered state of consciousness.**

I think the basic problem lies in the insistence of materialist science that there is only one level or dimension of reality, the physical world. All the rest are illusions or imaginary lie (they label supernatural stories "fairy tales").

Commonly held or accepted beliefs are difficult to change. There was a time when everybody believed that the sun revolved around the earth, until Galileo proved it was the other way around.

But since that view was considered not only nonscientific but, more, heretical from an ecclesiastical standpoint, Church authorities forced him to retract his statements or be burned at the stake. So reluctantly he retracted under duress but he reportedly muttered, "But it (the earth) still moves."

Mexican shamans, whom anthropologist Carlos Castaneda wrote about in his fascinating books (beginning with the "Teachings of Don Juan"), say there are two ways of looking at reality. Tonal and the Nagual.

The Tonal corresponds to Le Shan's Ordinary Reality and the Nagual to Clairvoyant Reality. A person in the Ordinary Reality cannot see anything beyond the physical world. But, in the Nagual mode, he/she can see the unseen, or what ordinary eyes cannot see.

Psychics, mystics, and holy men and women of all countries from ancient times to the present have attested to this fact.

*Note: For inquiries on books, personal services, and seminars on Inner Mind Development, ESP and Invisible Helpers, Dimensions, and Seminars, Karma & Reincarnation conducted by this writer, please call 8307247, 09226880; fax 8120980; or e-mail jlicauco@pacific.net.ph.*

# A diva's advocacy

THE YEARS HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY good to actress Gloria Diaz, the country's first Miss Universe.

At 55, she remains lovely and bright, exuding self-assurance.

Her regal look, tennis grace and keen glare enable the former beauty queen to continue to shine in film and on television.

She has also become an inspiring advocate of breast health and wellness, reaching out to help women even all to live life to the fullest.

Diaz has always loved life to the fullest. She has been known to try new things, do them her way and accept whatever consequences they brought. She has not hesitated to speak her mind on subjects she is passionate about.

Professionally, she has become a multi-awarded actress, earning her the recognition of critics and award-giving bodies. She is currently in the cast of the top-rating ABS-CBN soap "Sana Maulit Muli." Before that, she had a major role in the movie "Kasal, Kanin, Kamatay," the 2006 Metro Manila Film Festival grand prize winner.

But her work has not kept her from another role, as spokesperson of the Breast Philippines' Breast Health Women's Campaign for Basic Health. The advocacy, she says, is giving her added purpose in life.

The campaign encourages women with osteoporosis (brittle bones) to actively seek and stay on treatment. It connects them with other women with the same problem so they can share encouragement from each other's support.

Osteoporosis, Diaz says, is a neglected silent disease that slowly robs the bones of its density and quality. As a result, the skeleton is weakened and the osteoporosis sufferer is exposed to greater risk of fracture, notably in the areas of the spine, wrist and hip.

Diaz says she is committed to basic health advocacy because she has seen how older family members and friends suffer from debilitating and sometimes fatal bone problems.

Through Breastlina, she has realized that osteoporosis can be remedied and the effects delayed. The campaign organizers' various activities, including workshops on osteoporosis management, encourages and supports patients in complying with the once-monthly Bonefos oral treatment.

Diaz says that kind of support is important as women stop taking their medicines because they feel it is unnecessary. She says the once-monthly therapy makes it easier to stick to the treatment.

The year, Diaz says Bonefos advocacy will be brought to women in key cities.

She met recently with Bonefos marketers in San Fernando, Pampanga, accompanied by nutritionist Soledad Ortega, who talked about bone-building food, and orthopedic surgeon Emil Tablante of St. Luke's Medical Center, who talked about preventing and managing osteoporosis with the once-monthly Bonefos oral acid.

Diaz says the Bonefos Hotline 8951234, website www.bonefos.com.ph/) program also encourages women to try new things, see new places, meet new people, and make new friends.

GLORIA Diaz

# Eye disease may increase risk of death in diabetics

A STUDY SHOWS RETINOPATHY, a common diabetes-related complication of the eye, is associated with an increased risk of dying within a given period of time in adults with Type 2 diabetes.

Retinopathy occurs when diabetes damages the tiny blood vessels of the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. It can lead to blurred vision and blindness if unchecked.

Dr. Matthia Laatikai, from the University of Kuopio in Finland, and colleagues compared the outcomes of 425 men and 399 women with Type 2 diabetes. The subjects were divided into three groups based on results of eye examinations: no retinopathy, background (early) retinopathy, or more advanced "proliferative" retinopathy.

All of the subjects were free from heart and vascular disease initially. They were followed for 15 years.

By minutes, proliferative retinopathy was associated with a 2.5-fold increased risk of death from all causes. This type of retinopathy in women was also associated with a three-fold increased risk of cardiovascular death and a nearly five-fold increased risk of coronary heart disease death.

Risks for death were also elevated, though to a lesser extent, in women with background retinopathy.

In men, proliferative retinopathy was significantly associated with death, including the risks of all causes, cardiovascular, and coronary heart disease mortality by 3.05, 3.32 and 2.34 fold, respectively.

The association between retinopathy and mortality was independent not only of conventional cardiovascular disease risk factors but also of blood sugar control and duration of diabetes, the authors noted.

Source: Diabetes Care, February 2007
Reuters

# Getting the fab summer body

GETTING FIT FOR SUMMER IS NOT as hard as you think.

You can achieve a fabulous yet healthy body by managing your weight.

**Weight management** is not only important for developing a physique that you can show off but also for long-term health.

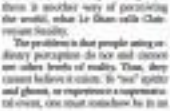
One of the ways to manage you weight successfully is by integrating cardiovascular exercise into your fitness regimen. Perhaps your body by doing a lot of walking, jogging, running, cycling or swimming to burn calories and increase your metabolism.

If you want to gain weight, you can do cardio exercises that will also help you gain more muscle and minimize the amount of fat you gain.

Another effective way to manage your health is by including vegetables in your daily diet. Healthy milk contains all the essential nutrients adults need, minus the fats.

Long known for its benefits in strengthening the bones because of its calcium content, milk was found recently to play a key role in weight management.

Milk has such essential nutrients as protein, vitamin A, vitamin B12, vitamin D, potassium, phosphorous, niacin and riboflavin that keep the body healthy.




**NOW!** Milk has all the essential nutrients adults need, without the fat.

People who want to shed a few pounds will find that the nutrients in milk play a big role in the body's metabolism by lowering whole-body weight-loss efforts more effective.

According to the United States National Dairy Council, three servings a day of low-fat or nonfat milk as part of a reduced-calorie diet help regulate body weight and burn calories for than cutting calories alone.

Consuming more calories than your body can burn is the main obstacle to achieving your desired weight. Increased intake of nonfat milk increases calorie intake but not total calories fat, making it easier to shed those calories.

Nestlé's Fit-Weight Management, a nonfat milk powder fortified with vitamins and minerals to help meet an adult's daily nutritional requirements, is one product that can help weight watchers manage their weight more efficiently.

Nestlé's newly enhanced diet, and Nestlé's Pro-Weight Management every day, you can achieve your desired figure for the summer season and the rest of the year while keeping your body healthy and more active.

Nestlé's also has a range of wellness products specifically designed to meet the Filipino adult's unique health needs.

As an energy booster at the start of the day, Nestlé's Cereal Milk Cereals offers a healthy balance of wheat and milk filled with calcium and fiber for superior energy.

For a healthy heart, Nestlé's Pro-Heart has Arginil that helps lower bad cholesterol. Nestlé's Pro-Digestive, with its natural soluble fibers called fructooligosaccharides, helps cleanse the digestive system.

For stronger bones, Nestlé's Pro-Bone Protein has Calci-Lock that helps lock calcium in your bones to keep them strong.

Nestlé's Pro-Weight Management is available in leading supermarkets and groceries nationwide.

# Take the bitter for the sweet

Newspaper Ed

ies and enjoy its benefits. Its versatility on the dining table easily lends itself to various culinary experiments.

In a recent bold and progressive move by Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III, the ampalaya was officially declared the Sangguniang Kabataang Gulay (Council of the Department).

This was based on the conclusions by Dr. William Sweet that the vegetable, "when used as dry powder extracts... has already demonstrated hypoglycemic activity."

In this respect, the vegetable is now considered cause of medicine.

## Trivia and more

Here are some tips on the use of ampalaya:

Juicing

Green veggie juicing delivers all the live enzymes your body needs for better cell nutrition. A friend and frequent guest in my radio program "Ma Beauty Pa Natural" (Sunday 11-11 p.m., DZMM/AM-630 Radyo Pilipino/AM-810), Leon Chiminazzo shares a personal recipe that uses tomatoes, fat in his being 69 pounds and improved health.

If you wish to "sweeten" the juice, you may use it with baby juice.

Recipe

Mix ½ of peeled ampalaya, cucumber, green bell pepper, red apple, three stalks celery, one piece garlic. Blend with ½ glass of water. Add one tsp. honey or sugar. Drink 2-3 times daily. (www.buffycinco.fourthestate.com)

Cooking

To neutralize the bitterness, rub the sliced veggie in rock salt, rub and shake off. Then toss into your salad bowl. Another way is to simply boil it in the freezer for 15 minutes and it is smells and tastes better.

Body scrub

Blend ½ cup of the veggie, plain or brown sugar, and enough amount of virgin coco oil. Rub all over your body except the face. Rinse immediately. It's a good skin softener and blemish remover.

Over a cup of tea

If you will pick a beverage when you have diabetes or ampalaya was while discussing the merits of this vegetable, Lito Atienzado, president of Chamomila, said the tea was not meant to be taken on an empty tummy.

Ladies who have dark and bags on puffies should have a tea bag handy. This way their blood sugar is controlled. You can now enjoy your sweet highs safely and merely with ampalaya.

But ampalaya is an ampalaya, any child in Bulacan will tell you.

"Sweet is my life today"
(you-and-light)

## Your Doctor Knows Best

Question:

Doctor Says...

Dr. Chua

cares

RUDY Tee, Shirley Marie Pizarro and Lynn Aganda. Standing: Cleo Chan, Steffi Hinconiego, Ferdie Aganda, Archie Castillo, businessman Benck Chiong and wife Lisa Salonga and Sunset publication

ANGELA, Mona and Bobby Lacson. Standing: Dennis and Mia Lacson, Jun Lacson, Robert Torres and Quino Lacson

ALFREO and Lorry Haim

ROSE Lacson, ace photographer Alex Van Hagen, Nena Cabrera and Andy Libano

# Au revoir and happy birthday to a Broadway star

MARY ANN Arnaldo Chan, Jojo Zaturno and Fransin Aguinaldo Jacinto. Standing: World-class singer Jose Mari Chan and Mr. Rock and Roll BJ Jacinto

MAFFI Francisco, Cindy Gipson and Tetchy Legislacion

JAIME Lays

DINE Ocampo Lacson, Lily Lacson Cuisquis and Dino Lacson Villasor

JUNBOY Lacson of Tito Down

TINA Jurado

GENEVIVE Benedicto, Anna Bolongaita and Grand Benedicto

EDWARD and Margarita Delgado

LAWYER Tito Tenorio and wife, costumer Pato Perdiguerra T

IT WAS UNDERTHE 4 PLUS get-together of real close pals, the dinner party for one very own world-class singer Lea Salonga hosted by Connie Morello's popular couple, businessman Jun Lacson and wife, one of Manila's top hostesses, Mona Ventura L., paluyagan.

The party was held in the beautiful garden of the Lacson compound in Pasay City.

The couple's son, Junbow Lacson, a member of the hot, hot The Dawn rock band and son of Lea's closest pals,

**WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH**

*Maurice Arcache*

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare

made sure that the honoree was one of our hip pack.

The happening was a shape up into birthday celebration for Lea L who left Manila shortly upon the party.

The excellent dinner menu was personally chosen by Nene L. and done by her own kitchen staff, dabbling. After dinner Lea and her hubby, the very cute Rob Chiu, were table-hopping to greet the partiers.

Highlight of the evening were the singing of "Happy Birthday" to Lea, who turned 36 the day she left the New York two days after the party), and the blowing of candles on her birthday cake.

She was off to the Big Apple for her new Broadway role in the crossover "Les Miserables" musical, paluyagan.

With honor flowing and the Tex-Mex-style food composed of Bobbie Gonzalez, Pete Barth and Ramon Mercado plating, the party really got rolling, sang pare Cinderella's feathers, dabbling.

## Ultimate Orient

Though I was reluctant to travel all the way to Pasay, the invitation from the Bank of the Philippine Islands to "The Ultimate Orient in the Philippine Islands" was intriguing.

BPI hosted this fab event for some of its clients and chosen partners at the awesome Le Pavilion, dabbling.

The theme were the four elements of nature ... earth, water, air and fire. Each element was related to BPI and its Preferred Banking. Highlight of the event was an eye-catching fashion show featuring Albert Enkin's elegant designs and Josephine's exquisite jewels.

Beaujhe Marvin Fernandez's presented dazzling performances to transform each fashion segment inspired by its element.

The best part was the performance by the talented quartet of Jose Mervil Vargas, no less, dabbling.

The happening turned out to be a sweet treat. "The Ultimate Orient in the Philippine Islands" is just the first of many events lined up by BPI. Can't wait for the second, paluyagan.

## Twisting and shouting

We were invited to the huge bash at Shenzhen's Platinum Mansion and Lifestyle host to celebrate the roaring Year with a "Twist and Shout" happening at the new and posh Marco Polo Plaza Cebu, paluyagan.

Marco Polo Plaza Cebu hotelier president Boy Villar and well-heeled general manager Jun Mercado welcomed the Platinum gang from Cebu and Manila in sweaters and gowns to the music of the homegrown Himatsingan band, no less, dabbling.

Looking and feeling great in their '50s outfits were National Artist Bienvido Pablo and Tito Rosario, Willie and Geraldine Ocier, Elli Gozon's Francis Lim, Mirabelle Ibarra, and Cebu Vice Mayor Michael Lopez Rama.

Annie Schlesinger, a veteran with beauty and brains who did a great job of putting together this event, looked dazzling. Fashionable Rep. Cynthia Villar, Annie Guinigundo Gov. Emilia Lopez and Margarita Del-gado were head turners.

Other hotelier guests were Jerry and Lianne Tha, with their daughter Cheryl, dashing business magnate Edward Delgado, Pete Magsaysay, Mike Toledo in his vintage Blue suit, maverick businessman Charles Tan, a valued client of the hotel.

Guests at the exclusive event, like National Commission for Culture and the Arts' Ambeth Ocampo and Heritage Society's Jorge Arts, Rambo Rempre, were treated to a yummy buffet. Premium prizes were raffled off throughout the evening as they "twisted and shouted" until dawn, paluyagan.

## Law firm anniversary

It certainly was a high-powered bash, paluyagan, the hospital law firm's fifth anniversary, evening reception at The Continental & Ravens Bar at the ritzy-ritzy Forum Globus.

How else would you call it, dabbling, when so less than President Macapagal-Arroyo handed the list of hotshot invitees who hovered in to congratulate the awesome name-dropping of the firm headed by topnotch and attractive lawyer Mia Bautista M. Bengzon, managing partner. Beside her was owner Nenita Mosqueda, who helped entertain the VIPs.

Lowell Bengzon, paluyagan, who is from Cebu, has brawny and brains. She was licensed to practice law in New York but returned to the Philippines where she has gained acceptance as a leader in international corporate lawyer, specializing in mergers and acquisitions, project finance and international joint ventures.

She was named by President Arroyo as a member of the 2005 Constitutional Consultative Commission, becoming its deputy secretary general. Mia did not go on and on about our woman of the hour, paluyagan.

The night had other stars, too. Guests included four-star general and Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Hermogenes "Boy" Esperon; Edu Manzano, a shining southern star in his own right, paluyagan; heavyweight government personas like the "Little President" himself, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita; Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez; National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez; Philippine Airlines president Jesus Jacinto Reyes; president of South-ern Airlines Rhodora Sevilla; Philippine National Railways general manager Jose Francisco; and businessman PR man and brilliant political strategist Bolet Carandang, but others, great pairs of members of the bar and other big, big names not for to handle, paluyagan.

BIRTHDAY girl, world-class singer and actress Lea Salonga, with hosts of the affair, mega businessman Jun Lacson and wife Mona

SEATED: Boyet Villavicencio and Mabi Abbas. Standing: Minerva Tavanlar, Monica Blanberg and Bing Rock

CHIT Salud and Karen Macasaet. Standing: Mimi Roberts, Bobby Hermosura and Reina Lozada

MANDY Torres and Ed Cruz

HENCHU Lauchengco Roke and Cherie Gil. Standing: violinist Ronil Regulf

ROB CHIEN

JEWELMER president Manuel Conjuangco; BPI president Gigi Montinola; and senior vice presidents Mechelle Abejo, Imelda Wilson and Jojo Ocampo

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotel's first couple, Christian and Sunny Tinsson, with BPI officer Susan Lumabao

BPI vice president Olga Ang, Mercy Sauntong Lim and BPI senior vice president and head of BPI Preferred Banking, Imelda Tria

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is welcomed by PNB GH Jose Soriano and lawyer Mela Bengzon

HOTSHOTS. Boy Villar, president, Marco Polo Plaza Cebu; Joni Abad, head of Visayas and Mindanao, Mercedaria Gotil; Alex Ateby, first VP for marketing and sales, Mandaluyong Gotil; Lifestyle Asia's Susi Yap; and Hans Kraus, GM, Marco Polo Plaza Cebu

OPTICAL Media board chair Edu Manzano; super handsome lawyer Ismael Jose; brilliant PR guru and political strategist Bolet Carandang; and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

# ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Ennie G. Velarde

MARK GIL and Rael Lindsay in the famous "Cabaret" scene

It's been 25 years since Mike de Leon's 'fraternity' film was premiered at the Cannes festival, alongside his other work, 'Kisapmata'

# 'Batch '81' revisited

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

CELEBRATING ITS SILVER year is Mike de Leon's "Batch '81," which was premiered, along with his other work "Kisapmata," at the Directors' Fortnight of the Cannes International Film Festival in 1982.

The recent Manila run of Jeremy Segay, a member of the Directors' Fortnight selection committee, underlined the fact that, after De Leon's double screenings, a 20-year drought followed before another Filipino film, Marilou Diaz-de Leon's "Babae sa Breakwater," was shown at the 2004 Directors' Fortnight.

In between "Batch" and "Babae," Lino Brocka's "Gregorio del Hierro" was shown out of competition in 1989 and Raymond Red's "Anino" won the Palme d'Or for Short Film in 2000.

Apart from its Cannes screening, "Batch" is of special significance because it was made by about of Golden Age studios, LVN and Sampaguita. Its director is Mike de Leon, grandson of LVN matriarch Doña Sisang de Leon, and its producer is Mai-Elin Mercado, daughter of Sampaguita's Dr. Jose Perez.

### Problems, sparks

Mercado recalled that shooting "Batch '81" was far from smooth-sailing. "People were not [only] the ones who could get along with Mike."

Since she was producing "Batch" and the fifteen-feature-length-film "Pasasalamin Mo Ako" at the same time, she soon encountered such-these problems.

"Mike got mad and threatened to resign," she recounted. "He had more than enough on [my] hand time. 'With or without you, I will finish this movie.'"

However, she refused to have another director. "I didn't want to disrespect Mike. So I decided to finish the film myself," she said.

As luck would have it, among the unfinished projects once in Film's character "Kisapmata" is one."

"I knew nothing about shooting scene scenes, so I called up my friends (writer-star) Fernando Poe Jr. and (director) Eddie Garcia for tips," Mercado recalled.

"But was serious enough for De Leon to return to the set.

"He got worried that I would make good on his vow and finish his film," she said, chuckling.

### Personal crusade

The movie was a personal crusade for Mercado. She explained: "My son tried to join a fraternity. One night, I noticed he was black-and-blue from the hazing. I got so mad, I decided to make a movie that would expose the [negative] side of fraternities. When I told Mike, he thought of doing 'Batch '81.'"

However, Mercado came up with creative ways to get master De Leon and his film.

Her budget was only $15,000 and the cost of throwing a memorial party for the press was $2,000. With savings, she chose the early option.

To wrap, they didn't stay in a hotel. "We rented an apartment (set was the—mother-walking) dressers—from the owners."

### Breaking even

By the end of the harvest, she had recouped all in selling "Batch" to a foreign distributor. "You exactly $15,000. At least, I broke even," Mercado quipped.

Last year, De Leon was honored by the Philippine Board Asian Film Archive. In person-ing his works to its permanent collection.

The other Filipino filmmakers included in the archives are Lino Brocka and Lamberto Avellana. According to its website, the Asian Film Archive is "an independent charity founded to preserve film cultural's rich film heritage."

In accepting the honor, De Leon was quoted in the Archive's website as saying: "I'm very grateful to [the Archive] for taking on to serve in preserving how films."

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# plays warrior in new 'tele-epiko'

From page E1

...ilized why Joey was out on the ak... was just made pinalog. So the... up in the radio booth, Joey... it. He was busy entertaining lo... parents outside. It prompted my... to issue a memo to Joey.

...ast incident, according to him, ...he time much about work discipline. I... id say it paid off because ... well, ...ndsome Joey tonight now.

...s really "Tol 'Ahan, Bing" of TV ...

**Girls'**

...udio 23's "Us Girls" (Sundays, 8:30 ...) marks its first anniversary this ...th. Hosted by Chesca Garcia, Iya Vil... and Angel Aquino, the "Mine" ... covers fashion, food, lifestyle, fa... beauty and celebrity life.

...ey promise to have even more fab... ...ests as they kick off their second ... which includes a feature on ...ela. Chesca burst off girly vibes... ...ll about her marriage plans with her ...ger Doug Kramer. She blushes, "We... ...ll know it but I'm still waiting for him ...ually propose."

...e-Dongz all reasons that she doesn't ...ss of her fiancé's Gil Jones/Jet ...ada. "I don't know where people get ...ors. Jet is such a sweet guy. She ...ecome home and we make her feel ...welcome."

Just like in her show, Jet and Chesca have girl bonding, too.

**Soundtrack**

Star Records and ABAP Music to...ether all the blue romantics or experi...ence the immense power of love such the release of the "Sana Maulit Muli" ...ndtrack soundtrack. It includes Gary ...'s new rendition of the teleserye's ...theme song, my love bond "Ever Feith's "Sana Pangarap Lamang," Kim Chui's "Hiwa" and Mark Bautista's "Hanap Ka."

Living up to its title, the CD is really worth listening to on repeat mode.

**Chicken**

Gina Alajar is clueless about the sof...ter-side Snob that will feature the ...ppearance. Men that co-husband Michael de Mesa, Mark Gil and their actual. She laughs, "Maybe they plan to ...ompete me!"

Any surprises how Jun met her way ...more than she's single again? She sighs, "I'd rather protect my heart from harm."

Gina and I agree that love can some...times be the biggest enemy. Indeed.

E-mail ...

**DID YOU KNOW...**

LOS ANGELES—Actress Lisa Thiessen and hotelier Andre Balazs have split up. Thiessen was once married to actor Gary Oldman and Ethan Hawke. AP


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| GB3 | 1 300 | 2 NORBIT | | |
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| ACC | 1 DREAMGIRLS | 2 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS | 3 300 | 4 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA |
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4 300
5 PREMONITION
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## METRO EAST

1 PREMONITION
2 300
3 NORBIT
4 ZOMBIES
5 PATHFINDER
6 BECAUSE I SAID SO
7 TURISTAS
8 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI

## NOVALICHES

1 PATHFINDER
2 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI
3 TURISTAS
4 ZOMBIES
5 300

## PIONEER

1 TURISTAS
2 PREMONITION
3 NORBIT
4 ZOMBIES

## STA. ROSA

1 300
2 BECAUSE I SAID SO
3 DEAD PEOPLE 2
4 THE HITCHER
5 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI

## LIPA

1 EPIC MOVIE
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 THE HITCHER
4 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI
5 DEAD PEOPLE 2

## DASMARIÑAS

1 BRIDGE to TERABITHIA
2 300
3 DEAD PEOPLE 2
4 PATHFINDER
5 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI

## ANGELES

1 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
2 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI
3 THE HITCHER
4 THE NUMBER 23

## IMUS

1 THE NUMBER 23
2 300
3 DEAD PEOPLE 2
4 PATHFINDER
5 TURISTAS
6 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI

## STARMILLS

1 BRIDGE to TERABITHIA
2 THE HITCHER
3 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
4 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI
5 DEAD PEOPLE 2
6 300

## BACOLOD

1 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
2 RESERVE
3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
4 THE HITCHER
5 M.O.N.A.Y. ni SHOOLI
6 THE FOUNTAIN / 300

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# Diet plays warrior in new 'tele-epiko'

**DOLLY WOOD**
*Dolly Anne Carvajal*

TAKING PINOY HEROES TO greater heights this April is ABS-CBN's ambitious tele-epiko "Rosario," a beast of technologically advanced animation and effects, unique plot, superb direction from Wilk Marti and an all star cast lead by Dimples Romana.

Dimples plays the mature (Carmina) who rules with wisdom, not fears...very much like Dee in real life. The Rosario are the greatest warriors but face a their fiercest battle. What if like the Rosario, he has to choose between love and his vocation?

"Definitely lose," replies Dee. "At the end of the day, I want to be able to share my accomplishments—big or small—with my beloved."

Isn't he wary of the looming competition with GMA 7's "Lupin"? "I don't see it that way," he says. "I'm glad the industry is producing more quality projects. I believe that Pinoys can create a world-class TV series."

And Dee is ready to reclaim of his own.

### Rehearsal?

After the success of "Sweet, Sweet, Sweetie," Ryan Agoncillo is doing another movie about tying the knot. Its rop-life legal fiancé/estranged husband "My Expert Modeling" along with Maja Salvador, Jennylyn Mercado and Jason Abalos.

Ryan and Maja play ephemeral siblings. When Ryan plans to marry Jen, Maja unleashes on all sorts of schemes to stop the wedding.

What if this happens to him and Judy someday? Ryan replies, "I doubt my love one would interfere, but if anyone does, they can't make a dent in our plans even if they tried."

His wedding-themed films are sort of a "rehearsal" for him. "It has taught me that marriage is a union not only of two people but also of new families."

And what makes Judy good with in-laws? He smiles and says, "She's such a good soul."

Needless to say, that looks to be a busy, busy and weird life!

### Equal billing

I asked Arthur-Maja (Angel)-and-Joel Tim Jun if he foresees any billing problems with Jolens and Juday in their coming movie, "Utadja." He says, "Pareho kami. Parehong-pareho with billing. Just GMA Films assured me that it will be fair to both of them. Judy and Jolens call each other kumare. It's so big deal with them. Kahit-anuhin' dun they want each other kung anong-anong ikakasal sa kanila."

Why are a double wedding then?

### 'Slingo'

Matt Pinlac Shinichi "Slingo" is the newest, possibly the most thrilling game show to hit local television. Aired Saturdays, 7 p.m. on MBC, and hosted by the inimitable Joey de Leon, it's guaranteed to be the world's most popular casual online gaming format.

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Here's an interesting trivia about Tito Joey: Jackson I finally call Jo (note: Sing). During his younger years, he was a DJ and my sister was under supervision of JWOW.

One day my mom


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